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**OFFICIAL REVIEW  
AND MAGAZINE OF  
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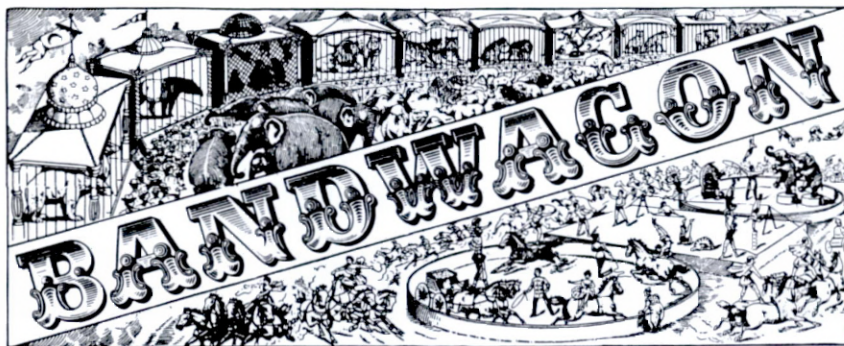


**THE GREAT  
Van Amberg Show.**

MAY-JUNE 1983

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY





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### THIS MONTH'S COVER

I.A. Southern of Cincinnati, Ohio, published programs in the early 1900s for a number of independent circuses such as Frank A. Robbins, Campbell Bros. and the Van Amburg Shows. Southern used stock articles on animals and the same material appeared in all of his different circus programs. In addition he sold national advertising that was interspersed with the animal articles. This section of the program remained the same throughout the season. He or his staff also sold advertising to merchants and banks in cities along the route of each show. These local ads were placed in an insert that contained the performance program. The dates of the stands covered by the insert were printed in the supplement indicating to the show when they should be used.

The cover of the program used on the Van Amburg Show during the 1908 season

is shown on our cover. Note that the title is misspelled as "Amberg." It is correctly spelled in the insert used for the March 30-31 and April 1, 1908 stands. The original cover is printed in one color, a light red. Original in the Pfening Archives.

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### HAVE YOU SENT YOUR DUES?

If your dues and subscription payment has not been made this is the last issue of the *Bandwagon* you will receive. The payment amount is \$16 in the United States and \$18 outside the United States.



# The First Mugivan and Bowers Circus Great Van Amburg and Howes Great London Shows

By Gordon M. Carver

## INTRODUCTION

The Van Amburgh and Howes names are probably as time honored as those of Forepaugh, Barnum, Bailey and Ringling in the circus world. The Howes name got its start in the late 1820's when Nathan Howes joined with Aron Turner to field one of the nation's earlier traveling tented wagon circuses. For almost 100 years thereafter the Howes name was prominent in the circus business in the United States as well as in Great Britain and Europe. While Nathan Howes started the family in the circus business, he was followed by brother Seth, sons Egbert, Elbert, and various other members of his family active in the business for over fifty years. Thereafter, while the name continued in use there were no Howes directly engaged in shows that used the name. (For a history of the Howes and Great London titles see John D. Draper's article in the January-February 1978 issue of *Bandwagon*.)

Issac Van Amburgh came along a little later. He got his start as a cage boy working for a menagerie company based in Westchester County, New York, with its principal headquarters in the town of Somers. However, it

Jeremiah Joseph Mugivan during the first years of the Van Amburg Circus. Pfening Archives.



was not long before he stopped cleaning cages and entered them as a "trainer." In the cages with lions, tigers and leopards he exhibited a fearlessness that astonished the populace of the small towns and cities on the east coast of the United States. Since his performance had to be given in the limited confines of the relatively small cage wagons (there was no arena as was later used), it consisted mostly of patting the animals, sitting astride them, lying down on or next to them, putting his head in their mouths, feeding them small bits of meat and doing other similar bits of action. In due course he took a lamb into the lion's den with him to give his act biblical implications, an important advertising gimmick for the times. Since his space was so limited it is obvious that there was no room for the animals to perform as they do in today's big cage. However, his act was a star attraction in its day and was quickly imitated by other young men, most prominently by Jacob Dreisbach. He stayed in the business for many years and his name continued to be synonymous with wild animal training for many years and probably became better known than that of Howes. His fame is exemplified by the still remembered song "Van Amburgh Was The Man Who Put His Head In The Lion's Mouth."

It is fitting that these two famous names were later utilized by two of the greatest showmen in American history—Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers.

Jeremiah Joseph Mugivan was born in Knightsville, Indiana, May 17, 1873, but reared in Terre Haute, Indiana. In the spring of 1892 he joined the Raymond and Company Circus, out of Denver, Colorado, as a ticket seller. The following year he was with the Sanger & Lentz show, where he also sold tickets. J.B. McMahon was the owner and manager of that fast grift show. This was his introduction to the "lucky boys" who caused small shows to burn up territory. After the 1893 season Mugivan was out of the circus business for several years, retailing bargains in railroad tickets. In 1900 he was with the Sells & Gray Show as assistant to John Talbott, the legal adjuster. In 1901 he managed the dining car on the Great Wallace Shows for William Hart, and in 1902 John Talbott and Mugivan had the

privileges and the dining car on the same circus. This experience with Ben Wallace was the start of a long and lasting friendship with the famous Peru, Indiana, circus owner.

In 1903 Mugivan had the privileges and dining car on the W.F. Smith's Howes Great London Shows. Smith, the Van Amburgh and Howes titles were to become Mugivan's start as a circus owner.

Bert C. Bowers, born in Wellington, Kansas, December 1, 1874, was associated with Mugivan in various circus adventures that led to ownership of the largest circus operating corporation in the history of the business. It was on the Sanger and Lentz show in 1893 that these two men first met. Their partnership continued until Mugivan died suddenly on January 22, 1930.

Mugivan and Bowers were to make their mark in circus history, and the stepping stone to their success was the first show they were to own in 1904. Mugivan was 31 years of age and Bowers was 30 when it all began, they were, perhaps, among the youngest circus owners in the history of the business. This is the story of their first circus.

I want to thank a number of in-

Bert C. Bowers whose long time partnership with Mugivan started with the Van Amburg show in 1904. Pfening Archives.







dividuals for their help in getting data on this show. Without this help much of the following could not have been written. Fred D. Pfening, Jr., started me off by allowing me to pursue and copy data from route books in his collection. John Polascek gave me copies of routes prior to 1911. Joe Bradbury furnished information on the show's elephants and train from his files. Bob Brisendine was very helpful in giving data that he had dug out on the show while it was in Atlanta. Early photographs on this show are rare; it was a great help when Fred Dahlinger furnished some photos and gave me leads that enabled me to get others. Bob and Greg Parkinson also were of great help when I visited the library of the Circus World Museum. And finally, my oldest daughter, Gail Faris, who lives in Houston, was able to get copies of much newspaper material concerning the show while it wintered and opened the 1908 season in that city. Again I must offer my thanks to these persons for with their generous help this story would have been virtually impossible.

#### SEASON OF 1904

Mugivan and Bowers were on the Howes Great London circus in 1903. This ten car show had its beginning as the Great Syndicate Show in 1900 and 1901, under the ownership of Col. J.F. Smith, and had its winter quarters at Centropolis, Kansas. In 1902 and 1903 the show was titled Howes Great London Shows. Shortly after the opening of the 1902 season Col. Smith died on May 4, and his son W.F. Smith then served as proprietor. The show toured the southwest in 1902 and closed in November in Portland, Arkansas, and was then shipped to quarters in Kansas City, Missouri.

The performers of the Van Amburg Shows in 1904. Left to right-Joe Bell, Charles Bell, Ben Beno, Bob Jacobs, George Valentino, Emma Valentino, Frank Gardner, George Kline, Kitty Erwin, Mrs. Albert Powell, Albert Powell, Sr., Albert Powell, Jr., John Hines, Netty Hines, clown Bill Irwin. Original cabinet photo in Pfening Archives.

The 1903 season took the circus to Colorado early in the spring and finished the tour in Florida in December.

An advertisement appeared in the December 5, 1903, *Billboard* selling the show. This ad details most of the equipment that was later owned by Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers. The ad stated that the Howes Great London Shows was to be sold in its entirety to close the estate of the late Colonel J.F. Smith. The show consisted of the following property: one 76' sleeping car, one 50' sleeping car, one 65' advance car, one 60' stock car, one 50' stock car, one 40' stock car, one 60' flat car. One trained elephant, 6½' high; two mountain lions; two bears; one deer; one peccary; one kangaroo; and other small animals. Seven cages, one candy wagon, one ticket wagon, one bandwagon, nine baggage wagons, one clown cart and two chariots. Thirty two head of baggage stock, one menage horse, one bareback horse, four horses broken for four horse act, fourteen sets of harness, eight trained ponies, three mules, broken to work. One big top 100', with 50' middle, one menagerie top, 60' with 30' middle, two horse tents, one cook tent and one dressing room tent. Twenty-eight lengths blue seats complete, seven lengths of Rosewood seats complete, sledges, stakes, etc.

The ad stated that the equipment could be seen enroute at the following

stands, listing cities to be played from December 5, at Dade City, Florida to December 16, at Stark, Florida. Winter quarters were Central Park, Macon, Georgia.

The Howes show went into quarters in Macon, but was soon shipped to Kansas City, Missouri. The show's former quarters were in Centropolis, Kansas, just outside Kansas City.

William F. Smith and his brother Frank sold some of the show in Kansas City, but it is not clear if the equipment went directly to Mugivan and Bowers, or through a middle buyer. In any case the two young circus owners did not acquire all of the Howes equipment, and none of the rail cars or animals.

Actually Mugivan had talked to Bob Schiller about a lot of circus property that he had stored in Kansas City. Schiller agreed to join with Mugivan and Bowers in putting out a show. Schiller's cash investment was important, and it was a blow to Mugivan when Schiller later advised him that he could not be a part of the new show.

Mugivan then went to his old employer W.F. Smith and asked him to invest in the new show. Smith advised them that he was willing to invest, but that he had no interest in traveling with the show in any capacity.

Mugivan hired Ed Brennan as his first general agent. He took Brennan with him when he called on the Venice Transportation Company in St. Louis. The two met with Henry V. Gehm, an official of Venice, and discussed the rental of the rail equipment needed by the new show. Mr. Gehm was a bit wary of the two young circus men and requested four months rental in advance. A compromise was made with advance payment of one month. The rail equipment from Venice consisted of four flats, two stock cars and three sleepers. They purchased an old Arms Palace car, and converted it into an advance car.

Early in April the show purchased three lions and two performing bears from Francis Ferrari in St. Louis. Mugivan was quoted years later in saying that his show opened with a \$260 menagerie that did not include an elephant.

Although W.F. Smith made a cash investment in the new circus, now named the Great Van Amburg Shows, it appears that he and his brother Frank also leased much of the former 1903 Howes equipment to the new show. It is not clear if this arrangement was made at the end of the 1903 Howes tour or after the first of the new year. Mugivan had gone to Kansas City after the close of the 1903 season to take over an amusement park. But this did not work out. He and Bowers probably had the new show in mind all along.

As mentioned earlier Edward L.



Brennan was hired as the general agent. This man's name would be well known in the field for many years and he was to serve as agent and railroad contractor on many shows, both large and small.

Besides Brennan, the advance was handled by Don McKenzie as manager of the advance car, and Frank Thompson as the boss billposter. There were nine men on the car, not a very large crew, but then it was a small show playing small towns. Interestingly there was also an opposition brigade headed by J.M. Wynns, with five men. This crew traveled on regular system cars with their paste cans and poseters being carried in baggage cars.

The Great Van Amburg Show opened Saturday, April 30, at Waverly, Missouri, and spent the next week in small towns in that state. Then on Monday, May 9, they entered Kansas at Mound City. The show stayed in Kansas through June 9 playing as they would for the rest of the tour in quite small towns. A few of the towns played in May were Belle Plain, La Crosse, Junction City, Centralia, Concordia June 7, and (except for three stands on their way back south at the end of August and beginning of September) completed the tour of Kansas at Wymore. They then moved into Nebraska at Table Rock on the 10th and spent the rest of June through the 29th there. On June 14 they were in Fairmont while they played a two day stand at Central City on the 27th and 28th, but only one day in the larger city of Cedar Rapids. They entered Iowa June 30 at Manilla followed by Ute after which they moved into South Dakota where they stayed through July 26. During those three and a half weeks they left South Dakota only for three dates—Rock Valley, Iowa, July 9, and Ellendale, July 16 and Linton, July 18, both in North Dakota. A few of the South Dakota towns were Elk Point, Dell Rapids, Bryant and Wilmot, the last stand in that state.

While we don't have a program for the show for 1904, we do have a group photo of the performers. The May 14 *Billboard* listed the performers, but did not indicate what their specialties were so we have no way of guessing at a program. However, we are almost certain that it was a one ring show given in a four pole top with the ring in the center middle piece. This was a fairly common practice in the small shows of that day.

The performers listed were the Hines and Kimball Trio, the Cliffords, "Tamborine" McCarthy (believed to be a clown), the Edwards, Ben Beno (doing various aerial acts and later becoming an international performer), Miller Brothers, George Cline, L.C. Zellano and the Valentinos. The foregoing list has about twenty-one names



George Valentino's perch act appeared on the Van Amburg show in 1904. Pfening Archives.

but in the picture referred to above only seventeen persons are shown. Either some of the performers did not show up for the picture which, performers being what they are, seems unlikely, or more probably the picture was taken later in the season after some of the performers had left, possibly for fair dates which was not uncommon.

The band of the Van Amburg Shows in 1904. Photo taken in Ruston, La., in the fall of 1904. The boy in the center is Albert Powell, Jr. Pfening Archives.



This was a small show traveling only on ten cars—an advance, four flats, three coaches and two stocks. It is also interesting to know on what a shoe string Mugivan and Bowers started out as show owners. Mugivan in later years commented that when the show left winter quarters they owned only two draft horses. To get the show on and off the lot and to parade they had to rent horses in each town. But in the first couple of weeks on the road every time they saw a farmer with a good team they would strike up a bargain, usually a sharp one, to acquire the horses. The result was that within three weeks they had their full complement of 32 head of draft stock, enough to fill about one and a half of the 60 foot stock cars. Neither did they own an elephant but did have one bull on the show. This was Pearl owned by George W. Hall, Jr., the side show manager.

Nothing more is known about the show this opening season of the Mugivan and Bowers operations except for the route. On July 27 they entered Minnesota at Renville and followed with five more stands there and then moved into Iowa August 4 at Lake Mills. After twelve dates in that state they returned to Missouri at Craig on the 19th. They continued to show in Missouri through Clarksdale on the 30th, with one side trip to Cincinnati, Iowa on the 24th. Following three stands in Kansas they started a tour of Oklahoma, Indian Territory and Arkansas which was to last through Ashdown, Arkansas, September 23. The next day they moved into Texas at Detroit and were to stay in the big



state through November 1 at Tenaha. While they were still playing in cross road sized towns, a few were a little larger. Paris, September 26; Commerce, September 28; Hearne, October 5; Lampasas, October 13; Bay City, October 20; Eagle Lake, October 21; and Nagadoches, October 29; were in this category. Then after twelve towns in Louisiana and three in Arkansas the season closed November 19 at Dumas, Arkansas. The show then moved to Sheffield, Missouri, where it wintered.

While we have no information on the subject, we must presume that the season's tour was a successful one for we know that Mugivan and Bowers were on their way to a profitable future.

#### SEASON OF 1905

For 1905 there is an almost complete lack of information concerning the show. Except for the route, a group picture of the performers taken during the season, one brief item appearing in the *Billboard* prior to the opening and one newspaper ad we have little other data on the show. We do know that they now owned an elephant, Major who remained with the show through 1915. This animal was purchased from Maj. John Gosney of New York. Also another car had been added to the show, possibly another flat or stock car. In any event it was now an 11 car show.

The *Billboard* item referred to above tells us that there was to be a rehearsal at Sheffield, Missouri, the winter quarters town, on Thursday April 20 prior to the opening Saturday April 22 at Pleasant Valley. At the end of the preceding week shipments of animals to augment the menagerie had been received. Two large African lions and

a white camel arrived Friday, April 14 from the B.E. Wallace shows winter quarters in Peru. The following day, April 15, they received from the New York City animal dealer, Louis Ruhe, an elephant, two hyenas, twelve monkeys, a box of pythons, a box of macaws and a bird of paradise. The pythons were probably for the "snake enchantress" in the side show. The other animals would suggest an enlargement of the menagerie. If more cages were added to the menagerie then the car added to the train was probably a flat.

The group picture appears to have been taken with the personnel standing in front of the same wagon they had their picture taken in front of in 1904, but with possibly different paintings on its sides, probably the lead bandwagon in the parade. In the group photograph there are only six persons who appeared in the 1904 picture. They are the Hines-Kimball trio, the Bell brothers, and Ben Beno. As in 1904, there are three clowns but definitely different performers. One of them we can identify (from different sources) as Harry Mick who did comic female impersonations in the come-in and was later for a number of years on the Sparks Circus.

The 1905 performers on the Van Amburg Shows in a photo taken in Wadesboro, N.C. Back row, left to right—Wm. "Pee Wee" Van Dee, Ben Beno, Ed Millette, John Hines, Joe and Charles Bell. Middle row, Annie Carroll, Hatsu, Mrs. Kellogg, Mrs. Millette, Kate Dooley, Inez Cerene, Nettie Kimball (Mrs. Hines), Walter Jennier, Mrs. Jennier. Children, Jennie Rooney, Mayme Ward, Ira Millette, Roy Jennier, Guy Baldwin (in girl attire). Front row on ground—Kelly, Harry Mick and Burke, clowns. Pfening Archives.



## COMING ON ITS OWN TRAIN!

—THE GREAT—

## VAN AMBURG SHOWS



Hippodrome, Museum, & Trained Animal  
EXPOSITION

—WILL POSITIVELY EXHIBIT AT—

## DU QUOIN, FRIDAY, MAY 19

Newspaper ad for the Van Amburg Shows in Du Quoin, Ill., May 19, 1905. Circus World Museum collection.

A newspaper ad for DuQuoin, Illinois, Friday May 19 does not give us much help. If what it says can be believed the show had a hippo. However, since the show was traveling on only ten cars the likelihood of them having such a large caged animal is highly unlikely. Further there was no mention in the *Billboard* of the show acquiring such an animal, and although Mugivan and Bowers seemed to be reluctant to give that publication news concerning their show, it does not seem probable that the acquisition of such a large and important animal would have gone unreported. The other positive item in the ad was that Wheeler's Marine Band was again with the show, it having been the band with the show in 1904. One interesting part of the ad stated "No Gambling or Swindling Allowed. Honest and Fair Dealing a Motto of This Vast Concern." Knowing the reputation and propensities of Mugivan and Bowers in those early years and their subsequent history we have to accept this statement as being made with tongue in cheek.

The route of the show in 1905 was entirely different from the year before. It started a week earlier and stayed out exactly one month longer. The show opened in Pleasant Hill, Missouri, on April 12 and stayed in that state through May 12 moving in-



to Illinois at Thebes, Saturday, May 13. The last stand in Illinois was McLeansboro on May 23 followed by Mount Vernon, Indiana, after which came Sabree, Kentucky, on May 25. The entire month of June was spent in that state. In fact they did not leave until July 5 at Pennington Gap, Virginia. From then through September 13 they traveled back and forth between Virginia and West Virginia with only a couple of minor digressions. However, in this stretch of over two months they did play in a number of larger towns.

In July they played Bluefield, West Virginia on the 12th, Huntington, on the 17th, and Parkersburg on the 26th. They visited Buckhannon on August 10 and Elkins on the 15th, then moved into Maryland for one stand at Frostburg on August 21, and then came back to Virginia playing Front Royal on the 25th, Luray on the 26th and Shenandoah on the 28th. In early September their Virginia tour was interrupted by two North Carolina dates, Madison on the 4th and Roxboro on the 7th. On September 14-15 they were back into North Carolina at Edenton and Elizabeth City followed by Franklin, Virginia on Saturday 16. Then on Monday the 18th they returned to North Carolina to stay except for one brief visit in Virginia at La Crosse on the 26th. They remained in North Carolina through the month of October. Again they touched into a few of the larger towns in the area although mostly they continued to play the hamlets. Some of the bigger towns were Rocky Mount on the 2nd, Tarbor on the 3rd, Greenville on the 10th, Sanford on the 16th, Ashboro on the 19th, Rockingham on the 21st, and Lenoir on the 28th. They closed out the state at Gastonia on the 31st.

November found the show in South Carolina through the 29th at Chester, Spartanburg, Greenville, Florence with the last town being Fairfax. They entered Georgia at Hagen November 30. They closed out the season in that state, some of the towns being Vada- lia, December 1, Statesboro December 6, Tifton December 16 with the final stand being Montezuma December 18. From there the show moved into winter quarters at Atlanta.

But just before the end of the season the *Statesboro News* two days after the show appeared there, printed two items. One was a scathing article headed "Big Show Was A Big Fake—the Biggest Aggregation of Thieves, Cut Throats and Gamblers That Ever Hit Town." In spite of "every type of and form of a thief, pick pocket, cut throat, gambler and thug that was ever seen under one circus tent" the show apparently did capacity business at both performances. "The wheel of fortune, shell game and various other



The 1906 performers group of the Van Amburg Shows. Top row-clowns Harry Mick, Pee Wee Van Dee and George Cline. Second row-George Valentino, Emma Valentino, Charlie Bell, Frank Loving (clown), Johnny Hines, Nettie Hines. Third row-Mrs. Ed Millette, Ed Millette, Carrie Kellogg, Ben Beno, Joe Bell, and Charlie Crooks. Bottom row-George Turner, Hatsu, Viola Turner, Jenny Hines (Rooney), Ira Millette, Mayme Hines (Ward), Guy Baldwin and Bob Jacobs. Original cabinet photo in Pfening Archives.

devices" were run wide open. One Negro reported a loss of \$125 and a white man \$70. There were various short change rackets and the "famous hoochee-coochee dancers and every rotten featured calculated to corrupt the morals" of the townspeople. There is no doubt that Mugivan and Bowers ran a graft outfit but whether it was as bad as this editor pictured it is not now proveable one way or the other.

The other item had to do with an attachment on the circus and the holding of the train until \$1,000 damages for injuries to two locals were "milked" (the editor's word) from the show. From the language of the editor in this article it would seem to appear that what was sauce for the goose was also sauce for the gander. While many shows of this period were not blameless in "milking" whatever townsfolk they could the local politicians and police were often just as anxious to get their graft from the shows.

#### SEASON OF 1906

The year 1906 found the show with another car added to the train making it a 12 car outfit, including the one advance. Also another elephant had been acquired, Caradini Babe, who came

from Glen Island, M.Y. Another interesting addition to the show was Dr. Don MacKenzie, who it was announced in the *Sunday Atlanta News*, would look after the medical problems of the show's personnel. It seems unusual that a show this small would have its own MD but apparently Mugivan felt it was desirable.

Although still a small show it was large enough to spend three days in Atlanta, Thursday, Friday and Saturday April 5-7 for its opening stand under the auspices of the Shriners. While Atlanta in 1906 was not the metropolis it is today it was a large and prosperous town and the show was able to satisfy its citizens. A rather long and commendatory story about the show appeared in the *Atlanta Constitution* which we here quote:

The tumbling, low and lofty, the trapeze and the rings, the riding and juggling, the trained animals and funny clowns were all up to the standard of the best, the elephants could not have been better, while the horses, the dogs and even the trick mule left no room for adverse criticism. Bright and exceedingly attractive in style, color and pattern were the costumes, the Alice green and Nick Longworth brown being among the favorite colors.

In the leaping tournament, in which Bell and Van Dell, double somersault leapers, led a school of a dozen, each excellent in his line, there appeared a juvenile, a girl, Daisy Kimball, a mere tot, who went over five horses and an elephant turning two times as she swept gracefully through the air. Pretty, winsome and sweet, fragile, graceful and with



perfect fearlessness, a mere mite, she rushed apparently recklessly down the incline, vaulted into the air, hands foremost, as though diving into water, quickly drew herself together, twisted around like a knot, like a ball, and dropping on her feet, faced her lookers-on with a happy smile, a captivating gesture, and then returned to her place in line, ready to follow the big, husky fellows through the next turn. If a child ever caught a crowd Daisy Kimball gathered unto herself every man, woman and child who saw her work.

A double trapeze act by the Leons should not be overlooked. Ben Beno on the tight wire; Larke and Adams in a novelty act; Josie and Clarence Kimball, Charles Cook who did the somersault, a double, on that fast race horse, the performing elephants; Miss Kellogg on the flying rings; Miss Gertie Lewis, sailor perch; Hatsma, the barrel and parasol juggler; the Valentinos on the bar and ladder; the Bell Brothers, aerial workers; the school of educated poodles; the Milletts; Snyder, the contortionist; Miss Kate Bowers educated horse, Glencoe, were some of the best circus features ever seen in Atlanta.

Manager D.P. Phillips, long connected with circus life, was everywhere, when needed. The entire outfit is new, clean and yet carries that air inseparable from a successful tent show. With 300 horses and force of 500 people, 150 being actors, the Van Amburg Shows will leave Atlanta, hereafter their permanent winter quarters, for the 1906 season without a spot or blemish upon its general or detailed appearance.

This was an unusually detailed and complimentary review for a newspaper to print. It is obvious that Daisy Kimball was the star of the show as far as the reviewer was concerned, and perhaps she truly was. It is interesting that, of the performers listed, this was the third year on the show for the Kimballs, Ben Beno, the Bell Brothers and the Valentinos. While we know that this show was a gift outfit, contrary to its advertising, apparently some of the performers did not feel that this part of the operation was of any concern to them, finding that the performance itself was a satisfactory show to be a part of. It was still only a one ring show although the big top was a four poler. Finally the "300 horses and a force of 500 people" cited above was an obvious exaggeration lifted from the ad-

vance billing. It is doubtful if the show had more than 75 horses, draft and performing and 250 people. While the review can give us a pretty good idea of what the show was like, it is unfortunate that it was not a display by display review such as would appear in the *Billboard*.

After finishing the three day stand in Atlanta the show played in Marietta, Cartersville and Calhoun, all Georgia. They then entered Tennessee April 12 at Dalton and stayed in that state through April 28 followed by a short trip through Kentucky into Mound City, Illinois, on May 2. Two weeks in Illinois followed by a week and a half in Kentucky and five days in Indiana completed the month of May. While a somewhat larger show than in its first two years out it was still playing the very small towns. June found the show continuing in Indiana. Then on June 9 the show entered Michigan at Niles in which state they made a long stay with the last stand being July 18 at Quincy. Traverse City on the 21st, Petoskey on the 25th, Cadillac on the 27th, and Ypsilanti on July 16 being the larger towns visited. Then came eight stops back in Indiana followed by three in Illinois to complete July and the first half of the season.

Along about this time we learn of what the side show consisted. It was typical for shows of this size in this period. There was Shelby's Big Brass Band and Jubilee Singers—the colored minstrel type of musical organization which was just beginning to be a fixture in this type of show. The Camm Bros. presented Punch and Judy, marionette and magic acts. Mme. Rose

handled the snakes and Madame Veronica told fortunes. George Reed provided comedy monologues and Vaugh and Mosely presented a musical act. A rather unusual, for a circus side show, serio-comedy act was presented by Dot Asal and Inez Bell. Finally there was a Ladies Quartette (singers we presume of popular songs) and, of course, a group of "fancy dancers" for the benefit of the men who wanted to pay an extra fee to go behind a curtain to watch them.

The second half of the season found them, starting August 1, still in Illinois. It was to split most of that month between Illinois and Indiana closing August 28 at Bushnell. They played Bloomington on the 11th. On August 29 they entered Iowa at Augusta followed by Palmyra and Canton, Missouri. September was used to visit Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas. Beatrice, Nebraska September 24 and Horton, Kansas on September 26 were visited in this period. In October the show continued to show in Kansas at Fredonia on the 3rd and ending at Granola on the 6th. Then came Oklahoma through the 23rd with the rest of the month spent in Arkansas. The final full month, November, had the first four days in Arkansas followed by two days in Louisiana. Then starting at Timpson, Texas November 8, the show closed out the season in that state with the last stand being at Hallettsville, December 2. The show then, contrary to earlier statements that it would winter in Atlanta, moved to Houston where it would spend the winter.

#### SEASON OF 1907

**The Great Wallace clown ticket wagon was purchased by Mugivan and Bowers in 1907 along with the Carl Hagenbeck snake den. This photo was taken a few years later on the Howes Great London Show. Pfening Archives.**

Following the closing of the Carl Hagenbeck Wild Animal Circus in 1906, Ben Wallace purchased the show and combined it with the Great Wallace show for the 1907 season. Jerry Mugivan became part owner of





the Hagenbeck-Wallace show, and spent the season with it as assistant manager. Bert Bowers managed the Van Amburg show during the 1907 season.

Mugivan's presence on Hagenbeck-Wallace is verified by a note in the September 2, 1907 issue of the *Stake and Chain News*. A small item on the back page of this little publication put out by the show, states: "Jerry Mugivan returned from a visit to the Van Amburg shows and pronounces everything there is mighty fine."

The Great Wallace clown ticket wagon and Carl Hagenbeck's snake den were purchased from Ben Wallace and were added to the Van Amburg show in 1907.

As already indicated The Great Van Amburg Shows spent the winter in Houston, Texas. This city, while still small with a population of about 49,000, was beginning to show its future potential. Certainly it was big enough for the show to believe that a three day stand was possible. So on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, April 4, 5 and 6 Mugivan and Bowers got their show off to its fourth season. It was to be the last full year that the show would operate under the Van Amburg title for early in 1908 it would become Howes Great London Shows. But more of this later.

After leaving Houston a fairly fast trip north through Texas, Arkansas and Missouri was made. Some large towns were played on this trip—Galveston April 8, Austin April 10, Waco April 13, Corsicana April 16, Texarkana April 24, Pine Bluff April 29, Paragould, May 6, New Madrid May 8, and arriving in Illinois, at Cairo May 9. Only four other Illinois towns were visited followed by four in Indiana, the last being Jeffersonville May 18. Then came Kentucky, including Lexington May 20 and Winchester May 21.

June opened with three dates in

West Virginia including Ronceverte on the 3rd and White Sulphur Springs on the 4th. Then came six towns in Virginia among which were Staunton on the 8th and Charlottesville on the 10th. On June 12 they were in Maryland at LaPlata staying in that state through the 27th except for when they played Smyrna on June 20th, and Seaford on the 22nd in Delaware. Some of the Maryland towns were Annapolis on the 14th, Havre de Grace on the 15th, Elkton on the 17th, Cambridge on the 24th and Salisbury on the 25th. July was started in Milford, Delaware, followed by Dover.

Then the show, now definitely committed to the East came to Pennsylvania at Oxford, July 3, West Chester on the 4th, Media on the 5th, and Ardmore on the 6th, all Philadelphia suburbs. Then came a week of New Jersey towns, Burlington July 8, Mt. Holly July 9, Freehold July 10, Long Branch July 11, Keyport July 12 and Bound Brook July 13, all substantial communities. The show then returned to Pennsylvania at Bethlehem July 15 and entered New York at Oswego on the 22nd, where it would finish the month of July.

The show had been enlarged over the 1906-07 winter but reports are conflicting. The *Billboard* reported the addition of four elephants although Bill Woodcock, Sr., said that only three had been added, and we must accept his account. According to him, the three added were Moms, Monte and Topsy. These were acquired from the defunct Carl Hagenbeck show. These and the two, Major and Caradini Babe, the show already owned gave the show a "herd" of five elephants, a very respectable number

**The 1907 parade of the Van Amburg show in West Point, Ga., Shown are five elephants, four camels and the steam calliope. Carver collection.**



for a show of that size. With the five elephants and four camels, also acquired, it seems likely that more stock car space would have been needed. And this did apparently result in a larger train.

The *Billboard* reported that the show had purchased seven flats, four stocks and three coaches and that it would move on 18 cars—seven flats, four coaches, three box cars (stocks?) and two advance. This listing adds up to only 16, not the 18 stated. Further records report the show traveling on only 14 cars, up two from 1906. This would seem to be more likely. Certainly it is highly unlikely that a show of this size would have two advance cars. However, these reports may have counted the four or five man brigade that traveled on regular system trains as another car. As to the stock cars, the elephants and camels plus perhaps three or four horses would occupy one. The 60 foot cars then in use would each carry about 26 horses so that the other two cars would have been able to carry about 36 draft horses and 16 ring horses, a reasonable number for a show of this size.

Also acquired by the show, as reported in the *Billboard*, were two lions, two tigers and two pumas. These, if they were not replacements, would have been other reasons for the addition of another couple of cage wagons which with a couple of new baggage wagons would have required another flat car. Also reported as newly obtained was an African Gorilla. But we know that what the show got was a large baboon, a common advertising ploy in those earlier times. If we did not know from other sources, its description of being 5½ feet tall and weighing 150 pounds (only a half to a third of what a gorilla of that size would weigh) would give it away. It was also reported that it cost \$5,000, another advertising ploy. Later advertising confirmed that the "Gorilla" was in fact "Jake" a large baboon. One other addition to the show was the Yamamoto Troupe of Japs which would give the performance greater variety and strength.

When the show's Houston opening gave a little better idea of what it was like. Thursday's opening was preceded by the parade the first half or more of which was given over to the local bigwigs, firemen, the Mayor, local bands and members of the Civic Club, the sponsoring organization all of which got the most publicity. However, one article did cover some features of the circus part of the parade from which we quote. There were "Lady and Gentlemen riders in glittering uniforms dotted with spangles over white satin costumes. Four girls rode in a howdah on the back of the elephant."

The article continues, "Pony equi-



pages with children driving Shetland ponies was a feature. Clowns were numerous and a new feature was the elastic hay wagon [trampoline] and tumbling feats performed on it by the clowns. Five elephants, including the baby tugging at the tail of one of the larger pachyderms, took part in the parade as did a herd of camels and dromedaries.

"The den of African lions containing a pair of the finest specimens of these beasts in captivity [we wonder if this was the only open den in the parade] and displayed behind the bars a fearless young woman lion tamer. Several local bands and the circus bands, aided and abetted by the steam siren furnished music for the occasion. A band of negroes belonging to the show made good music indeed!

"A fine troupe of performing Japanese rode on one of the larger animals dens. Si and Maude were there, as was the clown driver of 'Whoa January!' Colonel, the black high school horse, as well as the beautiful horse with the swan markings and other trick horses were in the parade." This is perhaps one of the best detailed parade reviews appearing in a local paper that this writer has ever seen. While it is not a parade inventory-listing it does give us fairly good idea of the features of the parade.

The program review which appeared in another paper was equally good, far superior to most such newspaper stories. Among the general comments it said that the show was superior to the parade and that the reserved seats were more comfortable than those found on most circuses. It also commented favorably on the one ring and one act at a time, although there were two or more aerial acts given at one time on some occasions. It also spoke well of Prof. Wheeler's Marine band.

The show began with an entry of Messrs. Connors, Johnson and Bell astride horses and Misses Bell, Dooley and Ward rode in on beautiful horses in Roman fashion and made a fine display of horsemanship. Miss Kate Dooley, a female clown sang a song "which could be partly heard as the acoustics of a tent are not suited to vocal music."

It continued:

Then came the old time stunt, which is a good thing to revive, the slender athletes and funny clowns in great leaps from the springboard. Double somersaults were turned by Charles Bell, William Vandee, H. Doherty and William Henchey, Clown.

A great deal of wonder and amusement is awakened by Babe. The mountain mother elephant and her son. Babe does all kinds of clever tricks. But the young one obeyed his keeper but there was an angry storm in his



The snake den from the Carl Hagenbeck circus was added to Van Amburg in 1907. It is shown here in the 1907 parade, followed by mounted riders and a small cage. Carver collection.

tempestuous little soul. He grunted, roared, trumpeted and squealed as he walked on the blocks or over his keeper.

William Denton, Mlle. Zenta and Miss Rose Bender did some fine feats high in the air on

trapeze and rings. Then the clowns came into the ring. Next came a feature which is the best in the show—the Yamagoto troupe of Japanese from the Hippodrome in New York. They are very good in their acrobatic tricks. There are three little boys who awake intense admiration. They can double up in any kind of shape and the men, calm and smiling, throw them about as it they were rubber balls.

Ontel and Fielder, Chase and Henry, Williams and Connors have a lot of fun in mid-air with revolving ladders. Ontel makes a backward dive from a ladder. Master Roy Jennier does some good tricks with a pony. J. Alton and Mlle. La Tow do some good work on the trapeze. George Jennier repeats the trick that always brings laughter and admiration. Coming out as a drunken man he undresses on his horse and appears in pink tights, the professional rider. Mick, Zutka and M. Hatsu do some good juggling and hoop rolling [which sounds like the equivalent of a three ring number].

A fine feature is the Roman Ladder act of the Howards, three of them, slender, graceful girls. William Vandee works a device that keeps the audience roaring. He brings on his trained giraffe, Jargo, and makes this peculiar animal perform. Jargo does some marvelous tricks but he finally falls to pieces and becomes two men. [In what appears to be another three ring act] William Connors, Charles Johnson and Miss Emma Sipley are thoroughbreds on the silver wire.

Mr. John Smith, late of the Hagenbeck show, and Miss

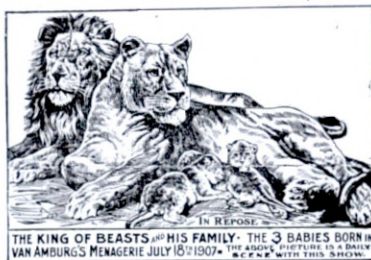
## THE GREAT VAN AMBURG SHOWS

—AT—

### HATTIESBURG Monday Nov. 11th

THE SHOW this year is Bigger and Better and in a More Commanding position than Ever Before to Maintain their Unrivaled Standing and Rank and to Amaze and Delight Their Thousands of Patrons with

MANY ENTIRELY NEW and EXCLUSIVE FEATURES



#### A Few of the Many Features You Will See

Marion Sheridan and Her Troupe of Performing Lions.  
A Herd of Performing Elephants, including Babe, the Largest Elephant in the world.

Rosedale, the beautiful ten thousand dollar Horse.  
Jake, the largest Gorilla ever exhibited in America. He is five feet ten inches in height and weighs 150 pounds, has tremendous strength, marvelous agility and his powerful arms are a wonder to behold.  
A TRULY WONDERFUL DISPLAY OF TRAINED ANIMALS.

400 People 250 Horses and Ponies 20 Funny Clowns

The Flower and Pick of Feature Performers From all Nations in a program of startling struggles and ludicrous revelries, carrying the spectators by storm and wildly applauded by all.

BRING THE  
LITTLE  
ONES  
TO SEE

## BABY

ELEPHANTS  
CAMELS  
LIONS and  
MONKEYS

An endless program of startling events. See the free spectacular street parade, starting from the show grounds at 10 a. m.

2---PERFORMANCES DAILY---2

Afternoon at 2 o'clock—Night at 8 o'clock

Newspaper ad for the Nov. 11, 1907, stand of the Van Amburg show in Hattiesburg, Miss. Pfening Archives.





The elephants, camels and a small cage are shown in the 1907 parade in West Point, Ga. Pfening Archives.

DeArval, late of the London Hippodrome, delight the audience with their trick horses Rosedale and Penrein. These horses are beautiful animals and do all but talk. They waltz and lie down, stand on stools and jump and kick.

Next J. George does tricks on the swinging perch, Miss Kate Dooley on the same contraption and Miss Sophie Ward on the swinging ladder [another three ring display]. The Anton-Bell troupe are fine acrobats. They throw each other around in great fashion and any kind of somersault. William Henchey makes fun with his mule, Maude. The Jenniers and the O'Neills do good tricks on the swinging trapeze. A stunt for children is Tuffy, the waltzing pony, and Jerry, the kicking donkey. Simbo and Sambo perform on the Spanish rings while two youngsters do a Risley act. The show is concluded by Walter Jennier doing a four horse riding act with four beautiful white horses.

It is obvious from the foregoing that a quite substantial program was presented with considerable variety. And certainly there were a number of three ring aerial numbers, as well as what appear to have been a couple of two ring ground acts. So while there may have been only one ring in the four pole top and probably only one actual ring curb the show could be said to truly be a three ring circus.

In the report on the show an interesting side light appears. It brings back memories to those of us old enough to remember the street cars in the cities and larger towns before the days of the widespread use and ownership of the auto. The paper states that there were plenty of street cars running early in the evening to take the crowds to show grounds, and a long string of them waiting at the end of the show "to take the folks home."

As August started the show was in

Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, in which state it would remain through August 25. All the towns played were very small ones, just a few being Northumberland, Lock Haven, and Elwood City. They then moved into Ohio at Burton on August 26, Bowling Green, September 2, Van Wert on the 9th, then into Indiana at Portland on the 12th and finished at Princeton on the 19th. Next they entered Kentucky at Henderson on the 20th and finished at Fulton on the 27th. Then came three dates in Tennessee after which they moved into Mississippi where they would remain through October 30. A few of the locations were Kosciusko, West Point, Yazoo City, Greenwood, and Vicksburg.

November found them moving back and forth between Louisiana and Mississippi. Some of the town they hit in this period were Hammond November 4, Brookhaven November 7, Hattiesburg November 11, Bogalusa November 14, and West Point November 23. Then on Monday the 25th they moved into Alabama at Mobile. They spent Tuesday enroute to Selma on the 27th to be followed by Montgomery on the 28th. They closed out Alabama December 5 at Dothan and closed the season at Quitman, Georgia on December 11. From there they moved to Valdosta where they set up winter quarters. It is interesting that the following winter Sparks Circus would use the same facilities for its winter quarters.

#### SEASON OF 1908

Having spent the winter in Valdosta a "Call" notice in the February 29 *Billboard* asked people hired for the season to report there to the show. Performers and side show people were to report to Jerry Mugivan. A.R. Wheeler had the band and was expecting his musicians. Thomas R. Tucker was Supt. of Canvas and was awaiting

seatmen and canvasmen, while side show canvasmen were to report to W.L. Jones. R. Murray was awaiting his property men and C.H. Munson his drivers. Cooks and waiters were to report to the cookhouse boss C.H. Phillips, and candy butchers to concession manager L.C. Miller. It is interesting that all other privilege men and this no doubt included the "games" operators were to report to Bert Bowers. This is the first specific, but not the least, indication that, while Mugivan ran the show, Bowers ran the grift.

In the 1921 interview Mugivan stated that he and Bowers had purchased two stock cars and an elephant car prior to the opening of the 1908 season. He added that they now owned their own train, indicating that they had continued to lease the rail equipment as was done the first year.

It has been difficult to account for the total number of cars on the Van Amburg show in 1908. A list compiled by the late Col. Sturtvant, now in the Al Conover collection, lists the show as traveling on 18 cars. With the addition of the three new cars mentioned above this would seem logical.

The elephant herd was increased by one with the purchase of Rubber from the Forepaugh-Sells Circus. This addition no doubt prompted the purchase of the new elephant car. The elephant herd now stood at six and from that point on through 1915 that would be the total number carried by the show, although there would be some changes in the animals.

A program booklet for 1908 Van Amburg in the Pfening Archives lists the performance lineup for the first month of the season. The insert with the program was used for the March 30-31 and April 1-2 dates. The advertising is for businesses in DeLand, Orlando, Sanford and Coca, Florida.

The program was a typical one published by the I.M. Southern Co., of Cincinnati, Ohio. Inserts were published and pasted in the program with local advertising. This was the custom of most circuses of the day, including Barnum & Bailey and Ringling Bros.

It is interesting to note that there were a number of ground displays with four acts, suggesting that the performance may have been presented in three rings and one stage. Some of the aerial displays used five acts, and the low wire display listed seven acts.

The official daily review listed Jack Cousins as Equestrian Director, and a one hour concert prior to every performance by Prof. Wheeler's Marine Band. The program listed these displays:

Display 1: Grand Opening Tournament, in rings and on hippodrome track.

Display 2: Folly Entree, or



blind man's bluff on horseback. Miles Kellog, La Tow, Fraser, Earl and John Smith.

Display 3: Topical Song by the lady jester Miss Louise Fancion, assisted by a group of merry makers.

Display 4: Grand and long distance, single and double somersault leaps, over elephants, camels and other obstacles, by a company of leapers lead by the Champion, H. Doherty.

Display 5: A herd of marvelous trained elephants, introduced by that Master Trainer, Mr. T. Buckley.

Display 6: Swinging Perch, T. Arthur; Cloud Swing, Al Samoya; Flying Perch, Miss Kate Dooley.

Display 7: Artistic Principal Riding Acts. By the queen of equestriennes, Miss Effie Dutton and Jack Cousins. Ring master, Charles Fick, Clown William Henchey.

Display 8: Clowns' Troubles with William Henchey and Vinc Harrig.

Display 9: Balancing Ladder, The Frasers; Triple Ladder Perch, Kishinua Troupe; Unsupported Ladder, James Irwin.

Display 10: Menage and High School Riding, Introducing the cake walking horses, Rose Dale and Spotted King. Miss Kate De Arval, late of Circus Rentz and John Smith, late of London Hippodrome.

Display 11: Mid Air Flights—Double Trapeze, the Powells; Contortion Rings, Duso; Single Trapeze, Miss Carrie Kellog and Flying Rings, Whittle.

Display 12: Bounding Jockey—Jack Cousins, ring master John Smith.

Display 13: Clown Fourth of July.

Display 14: Contortion Feats, By the human serpents, Camella & Forno, Bernard, Three Powells and Miss Maud Earl.

Display 15: "Whoa January" the kicking donkey "Jerry."

Display 16: Wonderful Head and Feet Balancing in Mid Air. The Frasers, W. Tessler, Miss Emma LaTow and James Irwin.

Display 17: Beautiful Poses on the backs of two horse. Miss Effie Dutton and Jack Cousins.

Display 18: Clown Entry by a company of fools.

Display 19: High Class Athletes and Acrobatic Diversions. Acrobat, 3 Diamond Bros.; Foot Risley, Kishinus Troupe, High Chair Pyramids, Camella & Forna.

Display 20: Hurricane Com-

edy Hurdle Rider, William Henchey and his famous mule Maud.

Display 21: Dexterious Exhibitions of Floating Wires. Two Irwins; Miss LaTow; Tesser; Bernard; Whitte; Arthur; Kishinua Troupe.

Display 22: Phenomenal Display of Grace and Daring—On the ground and in the air. Roman Rings, Fostella Bros.; Swinging Ladder, Miss Carrie Kellog; Roman Rings, Garton Bros.; Flying Ladder, Miss Maud Earl; Roman Rings, Samoyo.

Display 23: A Number of Novelties. Jugling, J. Irwin; Comedy Acrobats, Dooley & Bell; Comedy Hand and Head Balancing, Garton Bros.; Foot Juggling, Kishinus Japs.

Display 24: Whirlwind Five Horse Act. Jack Cousins, Ringmaster, John Smith.



Effie and Ed Dutton and their son Jim on the Howes Great London in 1908. Pfening Archives.

Some of the performers listed in the 1908 Van Amburg performance were quite young at the time and were well known on shows into the 1930s.

The Powell family included Albert Powell who did a single trapeze act on the Ringling-Barnum show in the 1930s. John Smith presented horse acts on the Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus and remained with the Cole show through the 1953 season when the show played only in Chicago. George Valentino who had appeared with the show in earlier years continued to present flying acts and was the back yard officer on Cole in 1939. Valentino died in Peru, Indiana, in 1946.

This season provides us with less data on the show than in any of the prior years. It opened the season on

Saturday March 14 in Valdosta and then moved into Florida where it stayed exactly one month visiting among other towns Ocala March 20, Tampa March 27, Orlando March 30, DeLand March 31, Miami April 6, West Palm Beach April 7, Daytona Beach April 10 and Jacksonville April 14.

Following Jacksonville the show went into Georgia again at Waycross on April 15, followed by Jesup April 16, and Savannah April 17. The show then entered South Carolina at Ridgeland on April 18 and in Charleston for a Monday stand on April 20.

It was in Charleston on Sunday the 19th that the most significant event of the season took place. The Great Van Amburg Shows became Howes Great London Circus. Charleston was the first stand to use their new title.

This title change so early in the season was due to using all of the available paper with the Van Amburg title. It is also possible that the show wished to get away from the reputation of being a grift outfit that the Van Amburg name had established.

It is possible that Mugivan who seemed to be the main force in the partnership had decided that it would be better policy in the long run to have a show without at least the most obvious and objectionable forms of grift. Whatever the reason, we know that for the next fourteen years (with the exception of 1917 and 1919 when the title was not used) it successfully toured the country without any serious local problems.

As Howes Great London Circus it moved up the East coast through South and North Carolina reaching Virginia at South Boston and Lynchburg April 29 and 30. Except for a brief return to North Carolina May 3 and 4 at Winston-Salem and Madison, it stayed in Virginia and West Virginia through June 19 at Tunnelton, West Virginia. From there it moved to Oakland, Maryland, one of six dates it was to play in that state, then to Keyser, West Virginia.

Following Keyser it moved into Pennsylvania June 24 at Berlin. It was to remain in Pennsylvania through July 24 at Bristol, which was preceded by by Latrobe, July 6, Vandergrift on the 7th, and Tyrone on the 18th. After the Bristol date the show played one New Jersey stand, Rahway on the 25th before moving to Long Island where it was to spend two full weeks visiting most of the North and South Shore vacation towns. They then returned to New Jersey at Red Bank on August 10, followed by Asbury Park, Freehold, Perth Amboy, Somerville, and Dover. The second week had Newton, Washington, then two towns just across the Delaware River, Stroudsburg and Bangor, and closing out the New Jersey visit at



Belvidere and Lambertville. After three more towns in Pennsylvania and five in Maryland the show started the southern tour to wind down the season.

This southern tour took the show again into Virginia and West Virginia for three weeks in September with all except a couple. Ronceverte on the 11th and Petersburg on the 19th, being very small towns. They entered North Carolina at Henderson on the 24th with some larger towns—Ashboro, High Point, Lexington, Albermarle, Lenoir, and Gastonia—following. South Carolina started October 20 at Gaffney. Then came Rock Hill on the 23rd and Chester on the 24th. The tour of Georgia started October 30 at Elberton followed by Toccoa November 2, three small Alabama towns, heflin, Lineville and Wadley and back into Georgia at La Grange, Thomasville, and Albany. The season closed December 1 at Cochrane after which the show moved to its winter quarters in Atlanta.

#### SEASON OF 1909

The advance car #2 (there was no car #1) left Atlanta March 15 only ten days ahead of the season opening which was set for March 25 in Atlanta. However, the opening road stand was to be at Rome, Georgia March 27, which would have put the car two weeks ahead at that stand. The advance crew, all members of the Billposters and Distributors Union, consisted of Don McKenzie, Manager; C.R. Clegg, boss billposter; Walter Philips, lithographer; John Talbot, programmer; and eleven billposters plus a cook, for a total crew of sixteen, about average for a show of this size.

quarters in Atlanta on Thursday through Saturday March 25-27. And it ended where it would spend the winter, at Jacksonville, Florida, for a two day stand December 22-23. As in 1908 the show would play mostly the East coast except for the first three months when it would move through Tennessee, Kentucky and Ohio. On July 2 it moved into Pennsylvania. From then on, except for seven late season stands in Alabama, it would be in New England and the East coast. The season was also noteworthy in that the number of larger towns played, once it got out of Kentucky, seemed to be more numerous.

After leaving Atlanta and Rome on the 27th it went to Rockmart, and Dalton, both Georgia and then into Tennessee at Cleveland, March 31. Then came Nashville April 3, Morristown, and Lebanon. On Saturday, April 17 the show moved into Kentucky at Hopkinsville in which state it would stay through Friday, June 11 at Ludlow. Only a handful of towns in this eight week stay in Kentucky were much more than villages, they being places like Princeton, Owensboro, Berea, Elizabethtown, Shelbyville, Frankfort, Lexington and Harrodsburg. On June 12 they moved into Ohio at Batavia. Other Ohio towns included Ironton, Bucyrus and East Palestine. The tour of the midwest was now complete.

When the show opened in Atlanta it was advertised as the Great Van Amburg Shows, although the title had been changed to Howes Great London

**A.R. Wheeler and his band are shown in the Howes Great London Shows in 1908. Wheeler is seated behind the bass drum. Pfening Archives.**



And so what would turn out to be the longest season the show would ever have, exactly nine months to the day, got started with a three day stand down the street from the winter

early in the prior season. Newspaper ads throughout the season would use a variety of title wording. In Lebanon, Tennessee, on April 14, the title was The Great Van Amburg and Howe's

Great London Shows. In Atlantic City, New Jersey, on August 30, the title in a newspaper ad listed Howe's Great London Circus and Van Amburg's Golden Menagerie.

But as the just plain Great Van Amburg Shows they gave a preview to the press in Atlanta and the coverage given by the *Atlanta Journal* is herewith printed in its entirety.

Out at the Jackson Street showgrounds Wednesday evening the big Van Amburg circus gave a full dress rehearsal—"just to oil the machinery," as one of the managers expressed it, for the opening performance Thursday afternoon for the benefit of the Firemen's Benevolent Association.

Outside, the driving rain beat its tattoos against the giant water-proof tent and the black darkness was unrelieved by the single flickering star. Newly painted paraphernalia pleased the eye and the martial airs turned loose by the red-uniformed band soothed and stimulated.

The performers who had just been called in from a three month winter rest were happy at the prospects of another season on the road. Their beautiful costumes were all new and they did their turns with a vim and go which indicated genuine pleasure in their work.

Even the animals blinked their eyes in happiness and comfort as they gazed fondly up at the sputtering gas lamps. There was an air of complacent pleasure manifest in every showman and in the inanimate objects connected with the show. "You know," remarked John Smith, Ring master, a descendant of three generations of circus folk, "it makes the pulse of a circus man beat fast and furious when the band strikes up the music for the grand march at the first dress rehearsal of a new season. There is an indescribable feeling connected with it. It is like being resurrected from a three months nap."

Promptly at eight o'clock the bugle sounded and the grand march was begun. The band leading, the procession filed from the padroom at the extreme end of the tent. The color effect was superb. The men riders wore scarlett and the women white. The mounts were caparisoned in red and white.

Following the triumphal parade the circus was on in earnest. Men scurried about pulling ropes here, letting loose trapezes there, and erecting



platforms yonder. The performers in glittering and bespangled costumes were all over the arena and in the rigging above.

Difficult feats were performed and bows and smiles made to rows of red empty seats. There were few spectators; just a knot of privileged newspaper men and friends of the management. For two full hours there was no let up. One marvelous act was supplanted by another and the performance was continuous in every sense of the word. Clowns were everywhere. They were funny mirthsome fellows, too. They perpetrated their jokes on the empty seats as the performers smiled at them.

In the program are a number of noteworthy features. The trained elephants do wonderful stunts and Rosedale and Colonel, the thoroughbred horses dance the minuet and do other things that challenge the admiration.

The Tybell-Jukien troupe of aerialists get off a number of new acts. Emily LaTow, in a slack wire exhibition, is the best ever seen in Atlanta. then there's the Kimball troupe of gymnasts; the Sarmonia troupe; Kate Dooley, the trapezist; little eight year old Alma Earle does her solo from away up above the reserved seats, the three little tumbling Japs, looking all the world like human billikens and dozens of other features.

The circus wintered at Piedmont Park. It will give six performances under the auspices of the Firemen's Benevolent Relief Association. Parades will be given daily. The first performance begins at 2:30 o'clock Thursday afternoon and the second at 8 P.M. The firemen will be in full charge of the big circus and record attendances are expected.

Although this is far from the complete review that we had of the 1907 show it does give a fair idea of the show. There are a couple of new names. The Yarnamoto troupe was apparently still with it. And the Kimballs who had not been with the show for a couple of years had returned. It is interesting the number of small children that performed. This was before the days of stringent child labor laws.

While the show apparently got off to a good start in Atlanta, it almost left town with a bad taste in the mouths of the Atlantans. It seems that the show had torn down some sheds and fences at Piedmont Park, the winter quarters. The city asked for \$300 to repair the damages, above rental fee,

(Season of 1909.)  
**THE GREAT VAN AMBURG**  
AND  
**Howe's Great London Shows**  
COMBINED  
AT LEBANON  
**Wednesday, April 14**

The Show this year is Bigger and Better and in a More Commandable position than ever before to maintain their unrivaled standing and rank, and to AMUSE and Delight Their Thousands of Patrons.  
MANY ENTIRELY NEW AND EXCLUSIVE FEATURES



A FEW OF THE MANY FEATURES YOU WILL SEE.

Marion Sheridan and her Troupe of Performing Lions. Prof. Buckley's Herd of Performing Elephants, including Duchess, the largest elephant in the world. Rosedale, the Beautiful Ten Thousand Dollar Kentucky Horse. Jake, Largest Jorilla Ever Exhibited in America. He is five feet two inches in height and weighs 150 pounds, has tremendous strength, marvelous agility, and his powerful trunks are a wonder to behold.

DAILY WONDERFUL DISPLAY OF TRAINED ANIMALS.

400 PEOPLE. 250 HORSES AND PONIES. 20 FUNNY CLOWNS

PROF. WHEELER'S MILITARY BAND



THE KING OF BEASTS AND HIS FAMILY. THE 3 BABIES BORN IN MENAGERIE JULY 18/1907. THE ABOVE PICTURE IS A DAILY SCENE WITH THIS SHOW.

The Flower and Pick of Feature Performers from all nations, in a Program Excellent, standing struggles and ludicrous revellers, carrying the spectators by storm and wildly applauded by all.

BRING THE LITTLE ONES TO SEE **BABY** ELEPHANTS, CAMELS, LIONS AND MONKEYS

Newspaper ad used by the Howes Great London Shows in Lebanon, Tenn., April 14, 1909. Pfening Archives.

which the circus refused to pay. So the city got an attachment. They took this to the show grounds Saturday evening as the show was tearing down preparatory to leaving. The show manager still refused to pay. So the city representative who had brought

a team of mules with him hitched them to the tiger cage and started to pull it off the lot. This brought a change of attitude of the circus boss and after some further discussion the claim was settled for \$100. Since the show had donated a water buffalo to the city and had been asked, what was apparently, an exorbitant sum for the damages, since the city settled for one third, it was the show that left with a bad taste. In any event the show never wintered in Atlanta again.

As previously indicated, on July 2 the show moved into Pennsylvania where it stayed for two weeks before it moved into New York to finish the month. Oil City, Pittston, Towanda, all Pennsylvania, Cornwall, N.Y., Cooperstown and Whitehall were the towns in this stint. August was spent in Vermont, New Hampshire, New York and New Jersey at Rutland, Burlington, Montpelier, White River Junction, Claremont, Brattleboro, Bellows Falls, Haverstraw, Perth Amboy, Asbury Park and Atlantic City. The latter city was originally booked for two days but at the last minute changed to one day.

September found the show moving south rapidly. Three more dates in New Jersey and four in Pennsylvania were followed by two and a half weeks moving back and forth between Delaware and Maryland with the month being completed with four days in Virginia. Bridgeton, Norristown, Pottstown, Chester, New Castle, Salisbury, Dover, Annapolis, and Alexandria were some of the principal towns visited in September.

October found the show on its last leg into the South. It entered North Carolina at Enfield on the 1st, in which state it stayed through October, then entering South Carolina. Rocky Mount, New Bern, Wilmington, and Aiken were a few of the principal towns played. Then came November with South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama being played through the 24th. Columbus, where they explored the possibility of the town for winter quarters, with Mrs. Mugivan stating she liked the social life there very much, Dalton, and Valdosta were the principle November towns. Then in November they moved into Florida, at High Springs. They were to finish the 1909 season in that state. Other towns that followed were Ocala, Gainesville, St. Petersburg, Lakeland, Tampa, Fort Myers, Orlando, Deland, Daytona, St. Augustine and closed out the season with two days in Jacksonville on December 21-22. They then went into winter quarters in Jacksonville, apparently Mrs. Mugivan's preference for Columbus, Georgia, either not being significant or her mind changed.

(To Be Continued)



# The Disposition of the Al G. Barnes Wagons

By Jim Caldwell

For many years the Al G. Barnes Circus was a ten car show, but by 1917 it had grown to 30 cars. In 1921 the show purchased all new flat and stock cars from the Mt. Vernon Car Manufacturing Co. Through the 1928 season, the last under Barnes ownership, very few changes were made in the physical equipment.

On January 5, 1929, the Al G. Barnes Circus was purchased by the American Circus Corporation, which also owned the Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, John Robinson and Sparks circuses. This gave its owners, Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers a very strong position in the business, and made them serious rivals to the giant Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows.

When John Ringling found that the Corporation had agreed to a deal with the management of Madison Square Garden to bring the Sells-Floto Circus into the Garden for the annual spring engagement in 1930, he purchased the entire American Circus Corporation on September 6, 1929. This gave Ringling title to nearly every circus of any size in America, and truly made him the circus king.

The great depression came in the fall of 1929, and soon took its toll on John Ringling's empire. The John Robinson Circus lasted only one more season, being taken off the road after the 1930 season. Next to go were the Sparks Circus in 1931, and the Sells-Floto show in 1932. Even Ringling himself lost control of his interests when he could not meet the payments on a note he had signed for funds to purchase the American Circus Corporation.

As a result of the failure to make payment on the note, the holders placed Samuel Gumpertz in control of all Ringling circus interests at the beginning of the 1933 season. This included not only the Ringling-Barnum show, but also the Al G. Barnes and Hagenbeck-Wallace shows as well as the winter quarters property in Sarasota, Florida; Peru, Indiana; and Baldwin Park, California.

Following the 1935 season the Hagenbeck-Wallace show was taken off the road, leaving the Al G. Barnes Circus as the only surviving show from the original purchase of the Corporation. (The Hagenbeck-Wallace was not out in 1936, but did tour again in 1937 and 1938 under a lease agreement and not under direct Ringling control.)

For the 1937 season the title of the Barnes show was changed to Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto Combined Circus. The Ringling management felt that the Sells-Floto name would

make the show seem larger as well as to keep that well known title in use and out of public domain. This combination was in name only, and did not involve the use of any physical properties of the former Sells-Floto Circus.

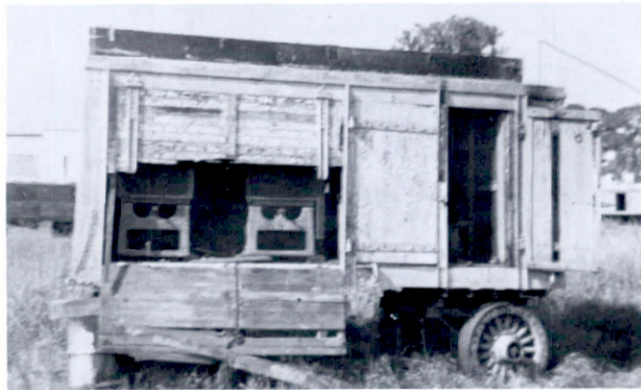
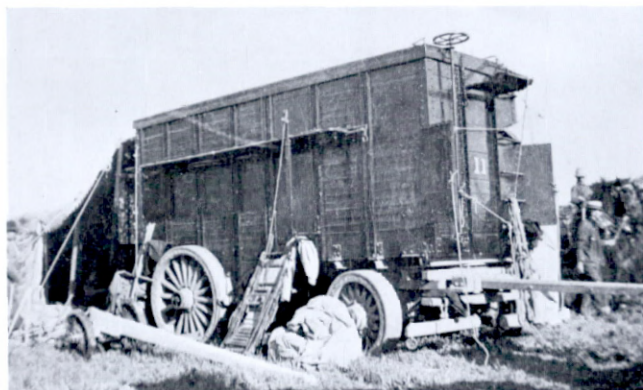
In 1938 John Ringling North gained control of the Ringling interests and the Barnes-Sells-Floto show toured again that year. On a few lithographs the John Robinson title was added, keeping that grand old name in use. But it was to be the last season for the Al G. Barnes title.

A strike by labor unionists caused the closing of the Ringling-Barnum show on June 22, 1938, in Scranton, Pa. The show returned to the Sarasota, Florida, winter quarters. Within a few weeks most of the featured performers, as well as a large amount of the physical equipment was sent to Redfield, South Dakota to join the Barnes show. The show was then billed as the Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto, presenting Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Stupendous New Features. A large amount of the Barnes equipment was sent to Peru, Indiana, after the arrival of the Ringling equipment. The augmented Barnes show finished the season and returned to the Sarasota winter quarters.

When the American Circus Corporation purchased the Barnes show in 1929 many of the wagons were in poor condition. A program of wagon repair and rebuilding was immediately begun with J.O. "Red" Forbes assigned the task. When John Ringling in turn purchased the Corporation, Red Forbes was retained and continued with the show through its final season. The Forbes style is distinguishable by his use of narrow boarding on the sides and vertical channel bracing. All Barnes wagons were on wooden spoke wheels throughout the entire existence of the show. The only use of pneumatic tires was during the final season of 1938, when the three Mack trucks were converted from the original solid rubber tires.

The wagon rebuilding program, which began in 1929, was pretty well completed by the mid 1930s. The only new wagon added to the show in later years was #24, a small commissary wagon built for the 1938 season. This wagon replaced one of the two former water wagons and took its old number. The rest of the wagons continued to use their previous numbers, with the exception of the chair wagons, which were formerly #46 and #47, which were renumbered

Barnes #110, light plant wagon was sent to Peru in 1938 and then on to Sarasota in 1941. This view was taken in Sarasota in 1959. Tom Parkinson photo.







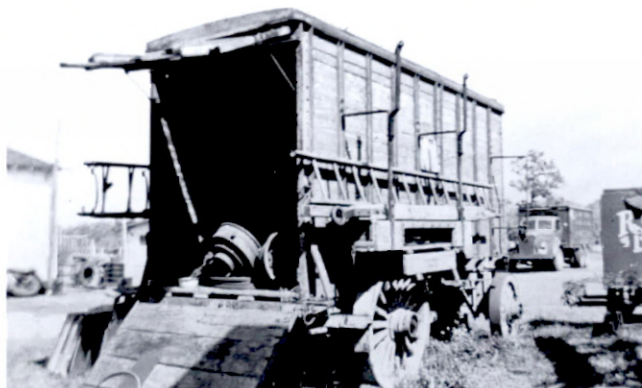
Barnes big top canvas wagons #82 and #84 were sent back to Peru in 1938. This view was taken in the Cole Bros. winter quarters in Rochester, Ind., in the spring of 1940. Harold Gorsuch photo.

#34 and #36 for the 1938 season. The electrical wagon #111 had also been previously renumbered #108, this change again taking place in 1938.

All the baggage wagons in 1938 were painted a deep red with the title and number in yellow. Wheels and undergears were also painted yellow and trimmed in black. A list of the 1938 Al G. Barnes equipment follows:

Number	Load Carried	Length	Width	Height
A	Cookhouse supplies and refrigerator	18'3"	6'	6'6"
B	Cookhouse canvas, poles, and tables	16'	6'	6'6"
C	Cookhouse boiler wagon	14'2"	6'	6'
1	Mack water truck	17'	6'	5'
2	Mack water truck	17'	6'	5'
3	Mack water truck	17'	6'	5'
11	Stake and Chain	16'4"	6'	6'6"
17	Stake driver	11'	7'	6'
24	Commissary wagon	10'6"	5'	6'6"
25	Water wagon	10'	5'	3'
34	Chair wagon	16'	7'6"	6'6"
36	Chair wagon	16'	7'6"	6'6"
39	Jack wagon	12'8"	7'6"	6'
40	Jack wagon	12'8"	7'6"	6'
45	Menagerie pole and canvas	18'	6"	6'
48	Clown prop wagon	14'9"	6'	6'
49	Big top prop wagon	16'8"	6'	6'
72	Side show canvas and poles	18'	6'	6'

The Barnes #76 pad room wagon finished the 1938 season and then remained in the quarters until it went to the Ringling Museum. This quarters photo was taken in 1951. Joe Bradbury photo.



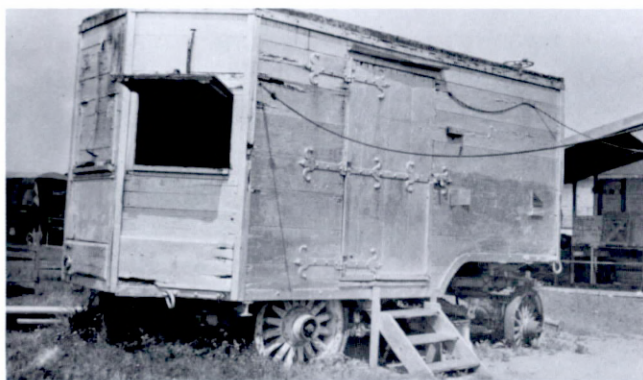
One of the Barnes canvas wagons is shown on the Cole Bros. train at Erie, Pa., on May 30, 1940. Pfening Archives.

73	Performers trunks	16'	7'6"	6'9"
76	Pad room and dressing tent canvas	17'3"	6'	6'6"
79	Blacksmith and horse tent canvas	18'3"	6'	6'6"
81	Stringer wagon	32'	6'	6'
82	Big top canvas	12'6"	8'	6'
83	Big top sidewall and rigging	14'	7'6"	6'
84	Big top canvas	12'6"	8'	6'
85	Concessions, candy stands	14'6"	8'	6'6"
86	Dog Wagon	14'	6'	6'9"
88	Band props, air calliope	16'	7'6"	6'9"
91	Seat planks, front door gates	14'4"	7'6"	6'
92	Big top pole wagon	32'	6'	5'
99	Big top props, arena	16'4"	8'	6'
100	Seat planks, ring curbs	14'	6'	6'
101	Seat planks, ring curbs	14'	6'	6'
102	Seat planks, ring curbs	14'	7'6"	6'
109	Generator wagon	16'	7'6"	6'6"
110	Generator wagon	16'	8'	6'9"
111	Lights and P.A. sytem	14'	7'6"	6'6"
112	Generator wagon	16'	6'	6'3"
180	Wardrobe wagon	15'	7'6"	6'9"
181	Elephant trappings	16'	7'6"	6'9"
182	Wardrobe and props wagon	16'	7'6"	6'9"

The Barnes seat plank and ring curb wagon #101 finished the 1938 season and remained in Sarasota. This photo was taken in the quarters in the early 1950s. Al Conover collection.





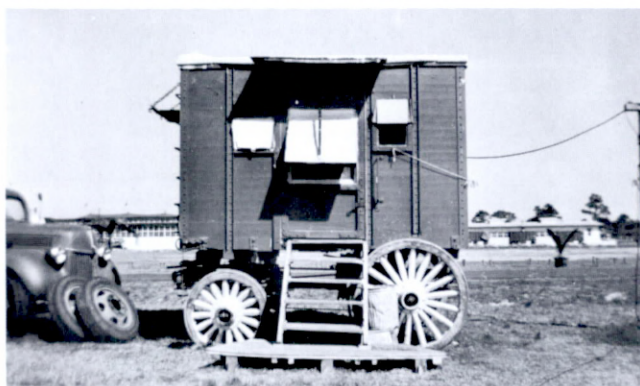


The Barnes white ticket wagon #183 was used by workmen as a home in the Sarasota quarters. This photo was taken in the early 1950s. Al Conover collection.

183	White ticket wagon	16'	8'	6'3"
184	Red ticket wagon	16'	8'	6'6"
200	Garage wagon	18'	7'6"	7'
(the following are all cage wagons)				
90	Hippo cage (painted green)	20'	8'	6'
95	Lion cage (painted red)	14'8"	6'	6'
105	Lion and tiger cage (painted red)	14'3"	6'	6'
106	Bird cage (old cat den) (painted green)	14'8"	6'	6'
107	Tiger cage (painted red)	14'3"	6'	6'
114	Monkey cage (bay window) (painted orange)	16'	6'	6'
117	Lion or tiger cage (painted orange)	14'6"	6'	6'
118	Lion cage (painted red)	16'	6'	6'
120	Lion and tiger cage (painted red)	16'6"	6'	6'
126	Bear cage (painted white)	16'	6'	6'
140	Tiger cage (painted orange)	14'3"	6'	6'
141	Lion cage (painted yellow)	16'	6'	6'
178	Tiger cage (painted yellow)	14'3"	6'	6'
179	Seal den (painted light green)	16'	6'	6'

The above list was made, primarily, from a listing compiled by Bob Bernard and appeared in an article written by Joseph T. Bradbury, on the 1938, Al G. Barnes-Sells

The Barnes commissary wagon #24 built new in 1938, is shown in the Sarasota quarters before being sent to the Ringling Museum of the Circus. Joe Bradbury photo.



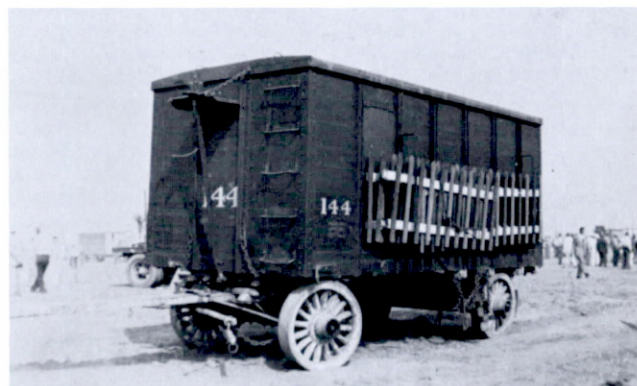
The Barnes #48 clown prop wagon was cut down and used as a utility wagon in the Sarasota quarters. This 1951 photo was taken by Joe Bradbury.

Floto Circus, which was published in the November-December 1967 issue of the *White Tops*. Several sets of measurements existed for many of the Barnes wagons. Some were in obvious error and, as a result, much research was done to obtain, as nearly as possible, the correct measurements. This was done by working from actual measurements of the few wagons that still exist, and obtaining many from the Barnes wagons that were later used on the Ringling show, where the actual measurements were taken.

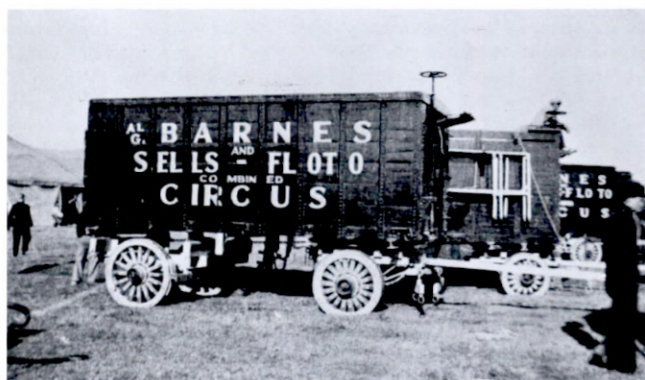
This was aided by an excellent set of photographs purchased from Jim McRoberts, which shows each individual wagon on the show for the 1938 season. It is not known who took the photos; but, it appears that several persons may have been involved. This would include, Bob Bernard, Walt Mathie, Ken Hull, and/or Gordon Borders, from whom the original set is believed to have been obtained. One important fact is that for some reason #182 prop wagon was omitted from both the original Bernard listing and the photo set. However; a photo in the Pfening collection, taken by Charles Kitto, shows this wagon on the show after the Ringling features were added. Other photos show it on the show in 1936; but, this is the only photo known that shows it on the 1938 show and proves it was on the show for the entire season.

One other point of interest is the water wagon used on the show in 1938. Ken Hull, who was on the Barnes show in 1938, states that the number was #23 instead of #25. While I have located several photos of this wagon with the number 25 plainly visible, I have not been able to find a photo showing it numbered 23. This is not to say that it may not have been numbered 23 earlier, as a lot layout

The Barnes #73 performers trunk wagon was used on the Ringling show through the 1950s. This view was taken on Ringling in 1940. Pfening Archives.







The Barnes chair wagon is shown on that show during the 1938 season. It was used on the Ringling show through the 1950s. Pfening Archives.

compiled by Jerry Boker, which appeared in an old mimeographed issue of the *Little Circus Wagon*, definitely has the cookhouse water wagon listed as #23. If anyone could supply photographic proof of this it would clear up this issue.

When the Ringling equipment was added to the Barnes show at Redfield, S.D., many of the Barnes wagons were taken off the show. Although Barnes had for many years wintered at Baldwin Park, Calif. these wagons were sent to Peru, Indiana, the former headquarters of the American Circus Corporation. Ringling now owned the quarters and had many former Sells Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, and John Robinson wagons stored there.

#### Barnes wagons sent to Peru Headquarters

Number	Type of Wagon
A	Cookhouse supplies - drop frame - roof
B	Cookhouse canvas - drop frame - roof
C	Cookhouse boiler - back portion open
11	Stake and chain - roof
39	Jack wagon - flat bed - open top
40	Jack wagon - flat bed - open top
45	Menagerie pole and canvas - drop frame - open top
81	Stringer wagon - flat bed - open top
82	Big top canvas - open top
83	Big top sidewall and rigging - open top
84	Big top canvas - open top
92	Big top pole wagon - flat bed - open top
100	Seat plank wagon - open top
102	Seat plank wagon - open top
110	Generator wagon - roof

Later wagons #11 and #110, along with several old parade wagons, originally on Sells Floto and Hagenbeck-Wallace, were shipped to Sarasota. After several years, the Ringling management felt that the surplus equipment stored at Peru was of little value to the circus. Therefore, on November 21 and 22, 1941, the remaining wagons were soaked with gasoline and burned for the scrap metal. Two other Barnes wagons did, however, manage to survive the burning. These were #82 and #84 canvas wagons, which were sold to Cole Bros. Circus in the spring of 1940.

For the 1939 season, most of the former Barnes-Sells Floto equipment which returned to Sarasota was placed in storage at the quarters. However, three Barnes cages were used on the Ringling show that year, to carry the performing lions for the Terrell Jacobs wild animal act. None of the former Barnes baggage wagons were used in 1939.

Beginning in 1940, the Ringling management felt that some of the Barnes wagons could be utilized on the Big Show. The following is a list of the wagons located in Sarasota and available at that time.



The Barnes chair wagon #34 is shown on the Ringling show in 1955, where it was Ringling #11. Pfening Archives.

#### Number Type of wagon

17	Stake driver - three way drivers
24	Commissary wagon - very small - roof
25	Water wagon - square tank
34	Chair wagon - roof
36	Chair wagon - roof
48	Clown prop wagon - open top
49	Big top prop wagon - drop frame - open top
72	Side show canvas and poles - drop frame - open top
73	Performers trunks - roof
76	Pad room and dressing tents - drop frame - roof
79	Blacksmith and horse tent - drop frame - roof
85	Concessions, cnady stands - roof
86	Dog wagon - roof - 36 pens
88	Band props - roof
91	Seat planks - open top
99	Big top props - open top
101	Seat planks - open top - steel sides
109	Generator wagon - roof
111	Lights and P.A. system - roof
112	Generator wagon - roof
180	Wardrobe wagon - roof
181	Elephant trappings - roof
182	Wardrobe and props - roof
183	White ticket wagon - roof
184	Red ticket wagon - roof
200	Garage wagon - roof

Plus 14 additional cage wagons

Wagons #11 and #110 were not moved to Sarasota until November of 1940 and were not in the list of available wagons for use in planning the 1940 season. Neither of these wagons, in fact, were ever used on tour with the Ringling show.

A close examination of the Barnes equipment on hand reveals that most of the wagons were only six feet wide or of drop frame construction. Also, the special purpose wagons such as the stake driver, water wagon, small commissary, generators, P.A. system, and the ticket wagons were not needed. With the exception of the narrow dog wagon, none of these were ever used. With this in mind, the following wagons were thus eliminated:

#17	48	76	109	183
24	49	79	111	184
25	72	101	121	

The Red ticket wagon was used later on, during the years of World War II as a downtown ticket office to promote the sale of War Bonds. It was used only at the indoor stands at the Garden and it was reportedly left there and not



returned to Sarasota. The actual disposition of this wagon is unknown.

This limits the usable Barnes baggage wagons down to:

#34	85	91	181
36	86	99	182
73	88	180	200

Of these wagons, #85 and #99 were, for some reason, never used on the Ringling show. Both of these wagons were of the wide body construction, with the wheels underneath and would fit the style of wagon chosen with little alteration. Why they were not used remains a mystery, as some modifications were made in those selected.

Originally the Barnes wagons used on the 1940 Ringling show were pretty much the same in appearance as they were on the Barnes show. They all retained the original spoke wheels at first, with the exception of #182 which was converted by Ringlings to a generator wagon and placed on pneumatic tires. Within a couple of years, most of the other Barnes wagons on the show were converted to rubber. The only exception was the dog wagon remained on spoke wheels until it was taken off the road in the middle 1940's and the #200 garage wagon, which was not converted to pneumatics until around 1949. All wagons did, however undergo number changes from the original Barnes number.

The Barnes wagons were very well built and many remained on the show until the final closing of the under canvas circus in 1956. Over the years, several changes in the numbering occurred and this will be clarified in the following listing:

Barnes No.	RBBB 1940's (early)	RBBB 1940's (late)	RBBB 1950's
34	170	16	11
36	169	42	64
73	144	144	30
86	147	Not used	Not used
88	Not used	46	117
91	Not used	29	Not used
180	168	137	137
181	145	135	135
182	110	17	Not used
200	200	100	Not used

This listing follows the Barnes wagons in use from 1940 through 1956. However, the Ringling numbers may be somewhat confusing, so a breakdown of each wagon will follow.

Barnes #34 chair wagon was first used on the Ringling show in 1940. It was renumbered #170 and used to carry props. Around 1945 or 1946, the wagon top was removed and it became #16 seat plank wagon. Then in 1949, it was moved to the Ringstock Dept. and used to carry poles and canvas for the horse tent. The number then became #11,

The Barnes performers trunk wagon #73 is shown on that show in 1938. It was used on the Ringling show through the 1950s. Pfening Archives.



as it replaced the previously used wagon which carried that number. It was taken off the road following the 1955 season and was eventually destroyed in the wagon burnings at Sarasota, when the show left for new quarters at Venice in 1960.

Number 36 chair wagon was also first used by Ringling in 1940. At that time it carried props and was numbered #169. This wagon later had steel sheeting placed on the sides and appeared in 1946 as wagon number 42. This should not be confused with two earlier version of #42. For 1951, several alterations were made to the wagon body. The rear doors were changed to open similar to a generator wagon and a similar opening was cut into the left side, near the rear. This was to enable the wagon to be used for carrying wardrobe on racks, which could be dispensed from the platforms. The number was changed to #64, replacing a previous wagon of the same number. This wagon has, somehow, survived as it is presently located in a junkyard near Astroworld Park in Houston, Texas.

Wagon #73 was another first used by Ringling in 1940. The number was changed to #144 at that time and it retained its number until around 1950 when it was transferred to the Ringstock Dept. At that time it became #30. It was used with very little change until the show closed in 1956. The wagon is presently located in the Ringling Museum at Sarasota, Florida.

The dog wagon, #86, was used for some time in the early 1940's. No actual changes in construction of this wagon ever took place. It was only used a short time and when it was taken off the road it was still equipped with the original spoke wheels. The wagon was later destroyed at the Sarasota quarters.

Exactly when #88 was first used on the Ringling show is not known. By the mid 1940's, it was used as a gorilla supply wagon and numbered #46. Later its was sided with steel sheeting and in 1952 became Ringstock Dept. wagon #117. It also remained on the show through the 1956 season and was destroyed in a accidental fire at the Venice quarters in 1962.

The #91 Barnes wagon was also utilized by Ringling some time in the 1940's. Some alterations were made to the wagon and a top was placed over a small portion of the front. It became an additional seat plank wagon and was numbered #29. This was only for a short time, as the mechanical seat wagons were introduced in 1948 and the former seating equipment was retired. It was placed in the Sarasota graveyard and eventually destroyed.

Wagon #180 was also among the wagons selected for use during the 1940 season. It was originally numbered #168 and later, like many of the former Barnes wagons found its way to the Ringstock Dept. At that time the number was changed to #137. It had compartments built into the inside to carry ringstock trappings. This wagon also remained on the show through the 1956 season and is now

Barnes #73 was Ringling #30 in 1955 and was used by the ring stock department. Pfening Archives.







The Barnes wardrobe wagon #180 is shown on that show in 1938. It was used on Ringling through the 1950s. Pfening Archives.

located at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

Wagon #181 was another used in 1940. It was originally numbered #145 and later changed to #135. Dog pens or kennels were built inside and a screened section was cut into the front for ventilation. This was another Barnes wagon that remained on the show through the 1956 season. It was later destroyed in the accidental fire at the Venice quarters in 1962.

Barnes wagon #182 was immediately altered by the Ringling shops to carry a single Cummins generator for the 1940 season. Since the generator was originally located in the front portion of the wagon, doors were cut on both sides to allow for ventilation. It was numbered #110 and was the first Barnes wagon to be converted to pneumatic tires. By 1942 the generator was moved to the rear of the wagon and the side doors closed permanently. By the mid 1940's the original Barnes rear doors were replaced by a generator type door and the wagon renumbered #17. At this time the former #126 generator wagon became #110 and was used for lighting the backyard. Number 17 was taken off the road in the late 1940's and destroyed at the Sarasota quarters some time later.

The garage wagon #200 was also selected for use in 1940. It was the only Barnes wagon to retain its original number, at least for some time. It was later changed to #100 and a door cut in the left side so that the driver could get out of the automobile once it was loaded inside. It remained on the show until around the 1950 season. It was last seen setting on the ground in the old Goodman junkyard at Sarasota. Although Goodman has been out of business for some time, it is believed to be still on the grounds behind the fence.

This accounts for the Barnes wagons used on the Ringling show. It must also be remembered that the three Mack Bulldogs from Banres were used on the show during the 1940's. By the 1950's, all of these trucks were retired. Also, many of the cages were on tour in the early 1940's; however, these were eventually replaced and none are known to be in existence today. One Mack truck found its way to the Ringling Museum; but, it was in very bad condition and is no longer there. Three Barnes cages were used on Ringling. They were Ringling numbers 104, 105 and 106.

Many of the former Barnes wagons located at Sarasota that were not used on the Ringling show were destroyed in the early 1940's. There were, however, several that were saved, for some reason. These remained around quarters for some time, being used as tool sheds and sleeping



Barnes #180 is shown on the Ringling show in 1954. As Ringling #137 it was used by the ring stock department. Pfening Archives.

quarters or various other purposes. Dyer Reynolds made a very complete listing of these wagons and a brief disposition of each will follow:

Number #24 the small commissary wagon was used as a sleeping quarters for the watchman. The original wheels were replaced by a much larger set to hold the wagon down during the hurricane season. It was moved to the Ringling Museum following the close of the Sarasota quarters. The Ringling show later repossessed this wagon and it is presently in storage.

Wagon #48 was cut down by the Ringling shops with the body being removed leaving only the front. It was used to haul trash, from around the quarters, out to the dump where it was burned. This wagon was almost unrecognizable in this condition and was later destroyed when the Sarasota quarters were closed, if not earlier.

Wagon #76 was spotted next to the blacksmith shop at Sarasota and used as a tool shed. The location of this wagon kept it out of the winds and it remained in very good shape. It was later moved to the Ringling Museum when the quarters were closed. Later, the Ringling show repossessed the wagon and it is presently in storage.

Wagon #99 was spotted near the horse barns and left pretty much unattended for years. It was later pulled out to the graveyard and was in rather poor condition when it was finally moved to the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin, where it was restored and is presently located.

Wagon #101 was spotted near the cat barns and used as a shavings or sawdust wagon. A makeshift wooden top was added to keep out the rains. This wagon, although made of metal, deteriorated badly and was later destroyed.

Wagon #110 was spotted near the Electrical Dept. and used as a storage shed. One of the electricians also used it as a sleeping quarters. It was transferred to the Ringling Museum when the quarters closed and is now part of the backyard scene there.

Wagon #111 was also reworked by the Ringling shops to haul manure from the elephant barn. The sides of this wagon were cut to only three foot high. It thus became rather unrecognizable as a Barnes wagon. The wagon remained in use until 1956, when it was destroyed.

Wagon #183 was spotted near the railroad tracks. It was painted silver and lettered "Side Show Dept." When the quarters were moved to Venice and the remaining wagons destroyed or transferred to the Ringling Museum, an attempt was made to move the wagon and it reportedly fell apart.

This accounts for the disposition of the Barnes wagons.





The Barnes big top pole wagon was sent back to Peru in 1938. It was burned there in 1941. Pfening Archives.

One final point should be covered, however. In a 1940 loading list compiled by Gordon M. Potter, there are three additional prop wagons described as ex-Barnes. These were numbered 171, 172, and 173. They were of the same appearance as the Barnes equipment, except for being on pneumatic tires. However, all of the Barnes equipment and disposition has been accounted for. This means that these wagons were *not* originally on the Barnes show and, thus, were built *new* by Ringling for this 1940 show. The construction is so similar to the Barnes style used by Red Forbes, that they were easily considered as ex-Barnes. In fact, it was first thought, that Forbes may have built the wagons. It was later learned that Forbes and Yeskee, the Ringling wagon builder, did not get along very well and that Forbes left the show soon after the Ringling equipment was added to the Barnes show in 1938.

Since the numbers of these three wagons were changed over the years, they will be covered in this article. It must be remembered that these wagons were *never* on the Barnes show and they are only listed here to avoid mistakenly grouping them as former Al G. Barnes equipment.

Wagon #171 was built new for the 1940 Ringling show. It later replaced the former menagerie supply wagon and took on its number, 10. Around 1950, it was shortened to a 14' wagon and in 1951 a door was cut in the front to allow access to an ice compartment for the storage of meat. This wagon remained on the show through the 1956 season,

The Barnes band prop and air calliope wagon #88 is shown during the 1938 season. It was used on Ringling through the 1950s. Pfening Archives.



and is presently located at the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus World near Haines City, Florida.

Wagon #172 was also built new for the 1940 season. It was originally a prop wagon; but, later changed to the Electrical Dept. The number was changed to #105 and it became the power control wagon. This wagon remained on the show through the 1956 season and it is presently located at the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida.

Wagon #173 was the third Barnes-like wagon to be built for the 1940 Ringling show. It was always used as a prop wagon; however, the number was changed to #53 in the mid 1940's and to #58 around 1950. Throughout most of the 1950's, this wagon was used only on the Garden stands at New York and Boston. It was loaded with side show platforms and menagerie equipment and, after the indoor stands, this equipment was transferred to the wagons which arrived for the under canvas tour. It was then returned to Sarasota. After the Sarasota quarters were sold, it was moved to Venice where it was destroyed in an accidental fire in 1962.

Much of the information on the actual disposition of the Barnes wagons is scattered throughout this article. As a result, a summary or complete listing of each wagon on the 1938 Al G. Barnes Circus will follow:

**Number Wagons and disposition** —(numbers in ( ) indicate

- |    |  |
|----|--|
|    | Ringling numbers)  |
| A  | Cookhouse supplies—destroyed at Peru, Ind., 1941.                |
| B  | Cookhouse canvas—destroyed at Peru, Ind., 1941.                  |
| C  | Cookhouse boiler—destroyed at Peru, Ind., 1941.                  |
| 11 | Stake and chain—destroyed at Sarasota, early 1940's.             |
| 17 | Stake driver—destroyed at Sarasota, early 1940's.                |
| 24 | Commissary—Ringling Museum, repossessed by RBBB now in storage.  |
| 25 | Water wagon—destroyed at Sarasota, early 1940's.                 |
| 34 | Chair wagon—destroyed at Sarasota, late 1950's (#170, #16, #11). |
| 36 | Chairwagon—Houston, Texas junkyard, (#169, #42, #64).            |
| 39 | Jack wagon—destroyed at Peru, Ind., 1941                         |
| 40 | Jack wagon—destroyed at Peru, Ind., 1941                         |
| 45 | Menagerie canvas—destroyed at Peru, Ind., 1941                   |
| 48 | Clown props—destroyed at Sarasota, late 1950's.                  |
| 49 | Big top props—destroyed at Sarasota, early 1940's.               |

This 1954 view shows Barnes #88, on the Ringling show. It was used by the ring stock department. Pfening Archives.





- 72 Side show canvas—destroyed at Sarasota, early 1940's.
- 73 Trunks—Ringling Museum, (#144, #30).
- 76 Padroom—Ringling Museum, repossessed by RBBB now in storage.
- 79 Blacksmith—destroyed at Sarasota, early 1940's.
- 81 Stringer wagon—destroyed at Peru, Ind., 1941.
- 82 Canvas wagon—Cole Bros. Circus, Paul Kelly farm Peru, Ind.
- 83 Sidewall and rigging—destroyed at Peru, Ind., 1941.
- 84 Canvas wagon—Cole Bros. Circus, Paul Kelly farm Peru, Ind.
- 85 Concessions—destroyed at Sarasota, early 1940's.
- 86 Dog wagon—destroyed at Sarasota, late 1950's (#147).
- 88 Band props—destroyed at Venice fire, 1962, (#465, #117).
- 91 Seat planks—destroyed at Sarasota, early 1950's (#29).
- 92 Big top poles—destroyed at Peru, Ind., 1941.
- 99 Prop wagon—Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.
- 100 Seat planks—destroyed at Peru, Ind., 1941.
- 101 Seat planks—destroyed at Sarasota, early 1950's.
- 102 Seat planks—destroyed at Peru, Ind., 1941.
- 109 Generator—destroyed at Sarasota, early 1940's.
- 110 Generator—Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida.
- 111 P.A. system—destroyed at Sarasota, late 1950's.
- 112 Generator—destroyed at Sarasota, early 1940's.
- 180 Wardrobe wagon—Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wis., (#168, #137).
- 181 Elephant trappings—destroyed Venice fire, 1962, (#145, #135).
- 182 Wardrobe and props—destroyed at Sarasota, early 1950's (#110, #17).
- 183 White ticket wagons—destroyed at Sarasota, late 1950's.
- 184 Red ticket wagon—abandoned in New York City, mid 1940's.
- 200 Garage wagon—still at Goodman's junkyard Sarasota (#200, #100).

This list should include the fourteen cages and the three Mack trucks used on the 1938 show. Three of the cages and all three of the Macks were used on the Ringling show in the 1940's. All of the cages were taken off the road in the early 1940's and the trucks by 1950. None of these are known to be in existence today.

Of the two canvas wagons that were sold to Cole Bros. Circus, both ended up with the Cole equipment at Peru, Indiana, when this show closed in 1950. They are now the property of Paul Kelly, and are at the old Terrell Jacobs quarters. One of the wagons was reportedly sold to a private individual and, as a result, only one of the wagons is still located there. However, due to the condition of the wagon, it is impossible to determine whether it is wagon #82 or #84. The Cole numbers for these wagons were #87 and #88. Both of the wagons were used to carry the big top canvas on both the Barnes show and the Cole Bros. Circus.

The preparation of this article took considerable time and was only possible through the help and cooperation of many individuals. I would like to thank the following: Ken Hull, Fred Pfening, Mary Krieger, Harry Chalfant, George Takacs, Gordon Potter, Joseph Bradbury, Joe Fleming, and others who provided much of the information before their passing. These include: Bob Bernard, Walt Matthie,



One of the three Barnes cages used by Ringling is shown in a 1940 photo on the Ringling show. Pfening Archives.

Gordon Borders and my good friend, Dyer Reynolds, who I wish could have read the final publication. Also, much help was received from Memphis State University and the publications of the *White Tops*, *Bandwagon* and the *Little Circus Wagon*, as well as the Al G. Barnes Ring of the Circus Model Builders and their publication the *Clarion*, many copies of which were supplied by Steve Flint.

Since this project spanned several years, looking at countless photographs, and the writing of many, many letters; it is entirely possible that I may have missed giving credit to someone who was instrumental in this endeavor. If this be the case, I am deeply sorry. Again, it was with the help of many that made the complete story possible.

If anyone can add or correct anything in the form of dates, photos, or any other information, I would be happy to receive your comments. Please contact the author.

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# The Flatfoot Party and the Zoological Institute

by Stuart Thayer

The "cover story" in the *New York Clipper* of March 10, 1883 was of Rufus Welch, then dead some twenty-seven years. Among the persons quoted in the article was the former equestrian and circus-owner Charles J. Rogers (1817-1895), then living in retirement in Philadelphia. In a resume of Welch's career, as he remembered it, Rogers made this statement:

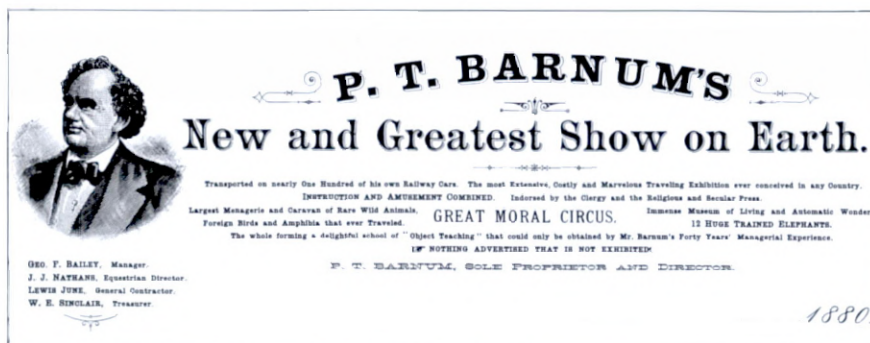
The Zoological Institute, so called, was owned by the Flatfoot party. June, Titus, Angvine & Co. were the principals of the monopoly, whose object was to force all menageries and circuses to sell out and take stock in this company for payment.

It is our opinion that this statement is the source for all later comment by circus historians and the cause of their misunderstandings as to the nature and relationship between the Zoological Institute and the group known as the "Flatfoots." The names of the two groups are familiar to anyone interested in show history and have been used interchangeably over the years. However, they were two separate groups of showmen. This monograph is the result of research into the question of how this error was compounded by subsequent commentators.

We should first point out that menagerie history, as separate from circus history, has not received much attention from historians. The genre was rather short-lived and ended in a period in which even circus history, until recently, was almost ignored. Using an arbitrary designation of the menagerie as being the exhibition of more than two species of animals we can date its beginnings as 1813. By 1839 the circus had assimilated the separate menagerie for the most part, and by the time of the death of James Raymond in 1854 it was almost gone. Excepting a very few companies, most notably Van Amburgh & Co., the menagerie was absorbed by the circus at Raymond's death and has been an adjunct to the arena ever since.

It is with the Zoological Institute that most researchers familiarity with early menageries begins. Because of their extensive newspaper advertising and use of large pictorial posters the Institute left behind the kind of artifacts that attract attention and therefore welds the name to the mind.

In an attempt at monopoly, just as Rogers said, the leading menagerie



While not generally associated with the Flatfoots, the 1880 Barnum show was the last circus run by that group. This letterhead dating from 1880 is in black, except

for the title "New and Greatest Show on Earth," and "Great Moral Circus," which is in a light red. Note executives listed on left. Pfening Archives.

and circus proprietors capitalized the Zoological Institute in January, 1835. Monopoly of a business has always been a thoroughly popular idea, but in the early nineteenth century it was still a legal possibility. The public in general opposed monopolies because their formation tended to increase prices artificially. State legislatures were loath to legalize the formation of corporations because they tended to become monopolies. In addition, the limited personal liability inherent in corporate structure seemed morally lax. In any case, several existing menageries were combined and cash investments accepted until the Zoological Institute had a capitalization of \$329,325.00. A board of directors took charge of the assets, dividing them into thirteen shows of various sizes, setting the routes for each and receiving reports from their managers once the season began. Only five shows were on the road in 1835 that were not affiliated with the Institute and these were circuses; no menageries other than those controlled by the monopoly were in operation.

C.J. Rogers went on to comment, "These would-be monopolists were successful for a time, but failed before all the sheep were driven into the fold. This failure occurred, I think, in 1837." C.H. Day, writing in *Collier's Weekly*, March 14, 1903, confirms this, stating, "... a combine which went amiss by the unpropitious arrival of the memorable panic of 1837." The words "Zoological Institute" appear in various show titles for several seasons after 1837, but there is no evidence that the association itself was still viable. The auction in Som-

ers, New York in August, 1837 of two menageries and one circus would seem to indicate the end of the Zoological Institute.

Rogers' use of the term "Flatfoot" is the earliest thus far located. The only major circus history published prior to his statement was T. Alston Brown's "History of the Amphitheatre and Circus" which ran serially in the *New York Clipper* in 1860-61. Brown does not refer to the Flatfoots by name and mentions the Zoological Institute in such a way as to indicate that he really didn't know what it was. He speaks of Rufus Welch as selling out to a company "called the Zoological Institute." Welch, of course, was one of the members of the Institute.

The Flatfoots were said to be named from an incident in which a rival show was informed "we put our foot down flat and shall play New York, so watch out," or words to that effect. Putting one's foot down flat was a colloquialism of the pre-Civil War era implying insistence. "I put my foot down," is a phrase still in use and connotes a limitation of some sort.

The earliest explanation of the origin of the term Flatfoot seems to lie in an interview with George Fox Bailey that was printed in the *Dramatic News Circus Special* of 1895. In it he revealed that Raymond & Waring had planned a tour of New York and were greeted with the above warning from some member of an opposition show. Earl Chapin May used Bailey's description in *The Circus from Rome to Ringling* (1932) and added, "Within a few days of this dictum from the syndicate the circus world dubbed



them 'the Flatfoots,' which they retained until 1880, the longest-lived and most effective syndicate in circus history."

Since both Bailey and May (the latter probably by derivation) say that it was Raymond & Waring that the warning was presented to we can date the existence of the Flatfoots as being no earlier than 1835. This was the year in which Raymond and Waring first had their names combined in a show.

George F. Bailey (1818-1903), son-in-law of Aaron Turner, went on to say, "I am the only survivor of the Flatfoots, originally comprising Lewis Titus, John June, Jesse Smith and Thad and Gerard Crane." Titus, June and Smith were partners in June, Titus, Angevine & Co. (along with Caleb S. Angevine), successors to the National Menagerie of 1832 and 1833. The Cranes were long in the business, going back as far as 1820. The Zoological Institute was formed, as we said, in 1835 and Raymond & Ogden and H. and E. Waring's respective menageries were combined into one of the Institute menageries, the first linking of their names. The principals of June, Titus, Angevine & Co. also combined their show with another for Institute purposes. James Raymond, Hiram Waring, Lewis B. Titus and Caleb S. Angevine were all directors of the Zoological Institute. It would not seem likely that the Flatfoots would warn Raymond & Waring away from New York when they were serving together, therefore the confrontation must have occurred after the collapse of the Institute, no earlier than 1838.

June, Titus, Angevine & Co., the partnership containing at least three of the five Flatfoots, went out of business at the end of 1842 (incidentally, selling their elephants to James Raymond). Lewis Titus had taken Isaac Van Amburgh to England in the fall of 1839 for a six-year stay. Upon their return in late 1845 the surviving Flatfoots took Van Amburgh & Co. on the road. This series of events would seem to indicate, then, that the warning to Raymond & Waring can be placed somewhere between 1838 and 1842.

Of those years Raymond & Waring played New York State only in 1840 and 1841, which may or may not mean we can close the gap even more. The problem, of course, is that we don't know whether or not Raymond & Waring ignored the warning. What we do have, however, is the distinct separation of the Flatfoots and the Zoological Institute.

We assume that C.H. Day in the *Collier's* article based his research on C.J. Rogers when he said that June, Titus and Angevine were Flatfoots and that they "attempted at one time to monopolize the profitable business in a

THE ASSOCIATION'S CELEBRATED  
MENAGERIE AND AVIARY,  
FROM THEIR  
**ZOOLOGICAL INSTITUTE,**  
BALTIMORE.

EMBRACING ALL THE SUBJECTS OF NATURAL HISTORY AS EXHIBED AT THAT  
POPULAR AND FASHIONABLE RESORT DURING THE WINTER OF 1843.

**WILL BE EXHIBITED IN ERIE,**  
(POSITIVELY FOR ONE DAY ONLY.)  
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**TICKETS OF ADMISSION 25 CENTS,**  
CHILDREN UNDER 10 YEARS OF AGE HALF-PRICE.

**LION, LIONESS, LEOPARDS.**  
The keeper will enter the following cages at 2 o'clock, P. M., viz: To the Lion and Lioness, and Leopards, all in same cage; to the Tiger and Leopard, all in same cage; and to the black-headed African Lion, and African Leopard.  
The inmates of these cages form a most gigantic and imposing spectacle. This group of the most fascinating and unmanageable of all the natives of the forest, furnished to the mind of the spectator an insuperable barrier to the belief that the art of man could subjugate to his will and control these wild and ferocious animals. Yet, in cordially used to be disposed to view as tame, he beholds his captives playing and frolicking with them, and all enjoying their wild gambols with an unaltered delight and assurance as children do their holiday gambols.

**THE UNICORN, ONE HORNED RHINOCEROS.**  
This animal has been a subject of much speculation among Europeans. It has been considered by some as mythical, and by others as a species of the Rhinoceros, and is now exhibited in the Zoological Institute. It is a native of Asia, and is usually found in those extensive forests that are frequented by the Rhinoceros and the Tiger, and is said to be a very valuable animal. The one now exhibited is supposed to be a male, eight years old, and was taken in the interior of Asia, on the Burmese River, by Doctor Hume, of Philadelphia, and imported to this city, at a very enormous expense, in 1833, and is now the largest in America, weighing upwards of 2000 pounds.

**THE ELEPHANT.**  
This is the largest animal in the world, and is said to be a very valuable animal. The one now exhibited is supposed to be a male, eight years old, and was taken in the interior of Asia, on the Burmese River, by Doctor Hume, of Philadelphia, and imported to this city, at a very enormous expense, in 1833, and is now the largest in America, weighing upwards of 2000 pounds.

**THIS MENAGERIE AND AVIARY**  
BE SPACIOUS CARRIAGES, WAGONS, &c.  
WE HAVE ON HAND AT  
112 Splendid Gray Horses,  
AND  
**SIXTY MEN,**  
(Including 14 Musicians).  
Are required to complete the exhibition.

The Zoological Association's Menagerie and Aviary, WILL be exhibited in Erie, on Friday, September 4th, 1835. Hours of exhibition from 1 to 4, P. M.  
The Rhinoceros will be drawn by 8 splendid Gray Horses, as represented on the large Bill; the Elephant Siam will appear at the head of the train; Six Musicians will be seated in a splendid saddle upon the back of Siam, and will play some of the most popular Airs, as the grand procession passes through the Village. Aug. 6, 1835.

combine . . . They were, of course, only part of the attempt.

Earl Chapin May sets out a scenario that we think he borrowed from Day. On page 36 of the Dover reprint of his book he states, "to the four young

Newspaper ad from the Baltimore branch of the Zoological Institute. From the *Erie* (Pa.) Gazette of 13 August 1835. Pfening Archives.

showmen of upper Westchester County [who he identifies on page 28 as John J. June, Lewis B. Titus, Caleb S. Angevine and Jeremiah Crane] stock selling seemed to promise more profits . . . than touring with a caravan . . . they acquired a rolling show, grandiloquently entitled 'The Zoological Institute.' " This recitation is erroneous, of course, and indicative of May's poor research methods. He has confused the two groups, treating them as one. Gerard (Jerry) Crane is the man he meant by Jeremiah Crane.

In his book *A History of the Circus in America* (1959) George Chindahl was careful to say, "the active managers [of the Zoological Institute] are reputed to have acquired the title, 'the Flatfoots.' " He might well have stated it this way because of the obvious lack of accuracy in May's work.

Richard E. Conover in *The Fielding Bandchariots* (1969), says on page 4, "the Zoological Institute, that association of showmen colloquially known as the Flatfoots . . ." Thus he takes his place at the end of this long line of historians whose assumption that the Zoological Institute and the Flatfoots were one and the same, all of it begun by C.J. Rogers' statement. It would appear that Rogers should have known the truth. A one-time partner of Nathan Howes, active in Institute shows and later co-owner of the firm of Spalding & Rogers, he was certainly at the center of the circus business of his time. It may be that he simply paid no attention.

As for the Flatfoots surviving in business until 1880, Bailey explains that, "The sons of these parties [i.e., June., Smith, Titus and the Cranes] and John J. Nathans and myself became successors later on." Bailey joined with Avery Smith (son of Jesse), John June (brother of the Junes), Nathans, Richard Sands and C.G. Quick to operate G.F. Bailey's Circus and later (without Quick and Sands) P.T. Barnum's Circus. In 1881 these later Flatfoots gave way to Cooper & Bailey as Barnum's partners and Bailey then retired. He was by then, as he stated, the only survivor of the Flatfoots.

If you have moved and not advised the *Bandwagon* of your new address, you will miss an issue. The post office will advise us of your new address at a charge of 35c. The address will be changed for the following issue, but a second copy of the magazine cannot be sent free of charge.

So rather than miss a copy advise us of your new address in advance.



# STAR BACK REVIEW

*Selected Letters of P.T. Barnum,*  
Edited and Introduced by A.H. Saxon.  
(New York: Columbia University  
Press, 1983).

P.T. Barnum has spoken to us both too much and too little. While his classic autobiography *Struggles and Triumphs* is confessional on some levels, after reading it one is left with the uneasy feeling that the book was calculated to obscure the private man as much as expose the public one. Partly because the book is so rich a primary source, Barnum's many biographers have relied heavily on it in their volumes. It was not until Neil Harris' fine monograph *Humbug* was published ten years ago that we began to see a glimmer of the personality behind the man who achieved some of the greatest successes in the 19th century show business.

Now A.H. Saxon has pulled the curtain all the way back by publishing 303 of Barnum's letters culled from an astonishing 3000 studied. One has the sense of finally meeting the real Barnum after reading them, and the odd thing is, he wasn't a bad fellow. He was, among other things, a compassionate humanitarian, a loving great-grandfather, a witty humorist, and even at times a naive innocent. He possessed some disagreeable character traits, of course, but in general one finds a much more pleasant person than expected. Behind it all a rock-hard self confidence and optimism shines through. "All praise to Him for permitting me always to look upon the bright side of things," he wrote a correspondent after one of his many set backs; and indeed, one is struck by his sense of divine guidance and consequent lack of self doubt.

While the letters tell us much about who Barnum was, they disclose even more about what he did. All the major events of his career—Joice Heth, the Feejee Mermaid, the American Museums, Tom Thumb, Jenny Lind, and the circuses bearing his name—are the subjects of most of the letters.

Those from the last twenty years of his life when he was part owner of the largest traveling shows in the country are of considerable interest, in part



Neither Barnum nor his great-grandchildren look as if they enjoyed sitting for this picture in August of 1886. On the left is Harry Rennell, whose letters from Barnum are published in this book. Pfening Archives.

because they shed new light on the extent of his involvement in these enterprises. The conventional wisdom is that he was a passive partner, making few, if any, decisions concerning the shows, and not really having a sense of what they were about. These letters offer ample evidence that such was not the case. In late 1870, for instance, Barnum located attractions and put together the courier for the show in which he, W.C. Coup and Dan Castello were partners. During his connection with James A. Bailey, he augmented the press department, made suggestions for improving many aspects of the show—and looked for ways to cut the nut. All in all the letters, including seventeen to Bailey, give the impression that Barnum had his finger on the show's pulse, and was hardly the silent co-owner depicted in some accounts.

The letters to Bailey, among the book's best, also reveal Barnum's admiration and affection for his last partner. This, too, contradicts prevailing opinion, which portrays the two as less than ideal associates with each having some antagonism toward the other. While further research on the matter is needed, there is at least one hint in the letters that Bailey reciprocated Barnum's warm attitude.

Two 1888 letters to Bailey are extraordinary. In one Barnum details a plan to monopolize the circus business, create a public corporation, and open a chain of permanent museums. This visionary document alone should silence skeptics who question his acumen as a circus executive. The other letter recounts a meeting Barnum had with Adam Forepaugh in which the latter proposed merging their two shows. Oh, that there could have been a photographer (to say nothing of a stenographer) on Forepaugh's lot that day!

Besides rehabilitating Barnum's reputation as a circus man, the letters greatly expand our knowledge of the inner-workings of the Greatest Show on Earth and the circus business in general. While important occurrences such as the importation and death of Jumbo, and the trip to England in 1889-1890 are covered in depth; other topics, such as the 1876 show for example, are also subjects of letters. Unfortunately, no letters contain data on his murky relationship with John O'Brien and P.A. Older, two circus men whose shows bore the Barnum title.

The letters concerning the American Museum are equally rewarding. Notable among these is a fascinating group to Moses Kimball, a Boston museum operator and close friend. They show the young Barnum, still a little brittle on the edges, working his way up in the business, crowing over his receipts one week, and beefing about difficult performers the next. The letters to Kimball are exceptional for both their frankness, and their vivid picture of the American Museum.

Barnum was not afflicted with the monomania one often associates with



towering achievement whether it be in the automobile or amusement business. He had extensive interests outside his field which are reflected in the surprisingly varied topics about which he wrote to everyone from leading intellectuals to an Iowa farmer. He particularly enjoyed writing men of letters. In a wonderful collection of correspondence to Samuel Clemens, Barnum forever begged Huck Finn's creator to write a few lines for the circus' courier.

He was deeply immersed in politics, including service in the Connecticut legislature and as mayor of Bridgeport. While a fervent unionist during the Civil War, he did not predicate his politics on the way the wind blew as he often publicly supported controversial causes such as temperance, woman's rights, abolitionism, and religious freedom. For the last he was jailed sixty days, thereby probably holding the distinction of being the only circus man ever to do time on a civil liberties charge.

Saxon has done a superb job of editing. The annotation is just right; it gives the beginner ample information, doesn't get in the way of the specialist, and, most importantly, allows Barnum to speak for himself, not through a forest of footnotes or the filter of commentary which is the wont of some editors. The book includes a perceptive introduction, a chronology of Barnum's life, and a note on sources which will help those wishing to pursue the subject further. It also contains an index. Too few editors or authors take the trouble to compile indexes, and one is always grateful to those who do; they are an invaluable time saver in checking a specific letter or person.

This book is an important addition to our understanding of both Barnum and the late 19th century circus. We are fortunate that Arthur Saxon, whose credits include an excellent volume on 19th century hippodrama and a masterful biography of Andrew Ducrow, has focused his considerable talent on Barnum. The result is an impressive tribute to an impressive man.

Fred D. Pfening III

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*It Was Better Than Work*, by F. Beverly Kelley. (The Prattice Press, Gerald, Mo., 1983).

It is said—by Bev Kelley, no less—that the worst thing to befall a press agent is for him to become the news story himself, outscoring the show he fronts. Well, in his latest book, Kelley is both the agent and the show. Rightly, he and his yarns are the main feature.

And feature it is. *It Was Better Than Work* is ninth in a string of Kelley successes and one that is purely auto-

biographical. We are glad for that; no show business luminary could have more captivating recollections, more great stories about great names. Nor has anyone else so successfully spanned several branches of show business.



Bev Kelley in the Ringling press office in the 1940s. On the bottom of the original photo, which was inscribed to Col. C.G. Sturtevant, Bev wrote that he wasn't as sad as he looked in the picture. Pfening Archives.

The circus cherishes Bev Kelley as its very own, so it is difficult to acknowledge that he is similarly revered as part and parcel of the legitimate theater world, that he headed up the national March of Dimes, that he settled into a desk job to run the illustrious St. Louis Municipal Opera. He was a director of a prominent fair and a famous university. He sold furniture and wrote poetry.

Even so, the circus still holds center ring in this book. Kelley tells about his stint with the John Robinson show, heading up press work for Hagenbeck-Wallace, originating the Ringling-Barnum radio publicity departments, then serving as chief of the Big One's entire press department. Never is his love of the circus more apparent than when he was with the rowdy Dailey Bros. Circus. He made Cole Bros.' penultimate season. Back with Ringling, he shared its tumult and its suffering near the end of tented operation.

Names? The list is endless in Bev's book. Names were his stock in trade; he helped build them. And his products included Leitzel, Codona, Wal-

lenda, Zacchini, Kelly, and many more. Equally, he tells about the names that were not on the wagons or in the billing but who made the circus a living thing—the bosses, operating chiefs, and main-stays. There are George Washington Smith, R.M. Harvey, Harry Doll, Allen Lester, Eddie Howe and as many others. He is at his best in recalling his fellow greats in press agency—priceless recollections of Dexter Fellows and Frank Braden, a treasury of Ned Alvord yarns—and best of all, the inside stories of Bev Kelley's own publicity coups. Among them were Maria Rasputin, Taft's elephant, Truman's calliope, the Fitch Bandwagon, *National Geographic*—all to the benefit of the circus. His story includes the giraffe-necked women, the Ubangis, Gargantua, Felix Adler, Jack Earl, and Alice from Dallas.

Who but Kelley could mix the oil and water of circus and theater so well? Bev interweaves his recollections of the brightest stars in the theater and the famous of the circus. It is another prime list—Mary Pickford, Ethel Merman, Judith Anderson, Lunt and Fontanne, Lillian Gish. At his hand, it is right that Senorita Carmen and Cornelia Otis Skinner share equal billing.

He is similarly at home telling about the famous editors, columnists, publishers and commentators; like Braden and Fellows before him, he knows newspapers. Kelley learned his trade at the elbow of press agents who thrived in the age of heroes and superstars; he helped elongate that era. Happily, he is proud to be a press agent and impatient with those who beg off as "PR" people. This is the book such a straightforward personality would write.

Three spots in the book loom large in my appraisal. One is a latter-day photo of Bev. He's with stars, but never mind. It is the aura he creates, with homberg, black overcoat, white scarf—the suave press agent, confident and competent.

Another is a quick cameo of his telling. He and Eddie Jackson are on a train headed for the Garden and opening day. Eddie poses a question. Bev replies with a single word, a name. In that is all the depth and understanding, compassion and sense of belonging that troupers can share. Words are barely necessary and communication is complete. Those two troupers could settle back in the warmth of being with it.

The third spot, really a chapter, is about the Hartford fire, where Bev Kelley demonstrated expertise in sensing the public's attitudes and how best to cope with them. He knew that after a century of circus boasting it was time for the show to reverse its stance and become humble. In that he



did a lot for the circus, maybe saved it.

In the book, Kelley salutes his family and especially his talented wife, Ruth, who shared in his career while succeeding as well in her own field of interior decoration. The dust jacket is a gem by Bill Ballentine and the forward is by Norman Vincent Peale. Bev Kelley always deals with stars.

Still, he is the star of his own production, as that press agent deserves to be. *It Was Better Than Work* is a welcome addition to the bookshelf of memoirs by the powerful personalities that gave the circus its vitality.

Tom Parkinson

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### CHS 1983 CONVENTION SOON

Additional features have been added to the program of the 1983 convention of the Circus Historical Society, to be held in Akron, Ohio, September 1 through 4.

The famous Quaker Square Hilton is the headquarters, built from old Quaker Oats grain silos. Special room rates have been arranged for CHS members staying there.

The banquet speaker will be Tom Parkinson, Past President of the Circus Historical Society and former circus editor of the *Billboard*. A number of papers will be presented on circus history. An outstanding selection of historic circus films will be shown.

The Sells Bros. Top (State of Ohio) of the Circus Fans Association of American will hold their state meeting jointly with the CHS in Akron, Ohio, this year. Each organization will hold some sessions together, and some independent of each other.

The highlight of the convention will be the appearance of the Carson & Barnes Circus, one of America's greatest under canvas circuses. But there are many additional features to behold at this great meeting.

A return post card was enclosed with the March-April, 1983 *Bandwagon*. Please send this card to convention chairman and CHS President, Richard W. Flint, P.O. Box 23574, L'Enfant Plaza Station, Washington, D.C. 20024, for additional information.

Early registrations indicate this will be one of the largest and finest conventions in the history of the CHS; you will not want to miss it.

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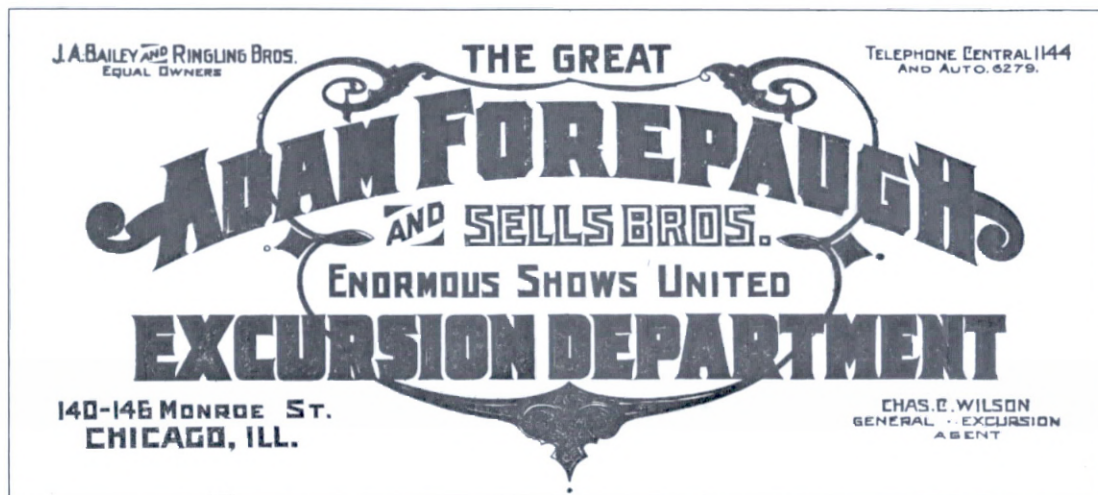
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## BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS



This letterhead used by the Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. Enormous Shows United in 1905 is unusual as it lists J.A. Bailey and Ringling Bros. as equal owners. Henry Ringling managed the show that season. The letter was written to Henry Ringling by Charles C. Wilson, the general excursion agent; it is dated April 8, 1905. It was Wilson's job to arrange excursion train trips from outlying towns within fifty or so miles of the city in which the show was playing.

Adam Forepaugh and Excursion Department are in red and black, with most of the smaller type in red.





This superb photograph of the Barnum and Bailey march down Purchase Street in New Bedford, Massachusetts was taken 9 June 1894. In the lead is cage #65, followed by #73. Both wagons were part of the group built by Fielding Bros. of New York for Barnum

and London in the early 1880s. The show got its money's worth as both wagons remained on the circus until at least 1916. Original photo from the Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Massachusetts. Copy print courtesy Fred Dahlinger.